
“Released From The Law, Bound To Christ”

ROMANS 7:1-6

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AT A GLANCE

Death releases us from the law. It's true in marriage, it's true in salvation. We died to the law and are bound to Christ. But what does that mean? Check out this message on Romans 7:1-6!

INTRODUCTION

Romans 7:1-6

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ² **For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.** ³ **Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.**

⁴ **Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.** ⁵ **For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.** ⁶ **But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.**

THE LAW IS BINDING ONLY AS LONG AS YOU LIVE

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? Paul appealed to people who he believed knew the law pretty well, whether they be Jewish Christians, Gentile proselytes who later became Christians, or people simply familiar with the teaching for the law. It is not clear to whom Paul is speaking with specificity. Regardless, the message is universal and next he gives a universal example.

Verses 2-3 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

The law regarding marriage and divorce and adultery is fulfilled at the death of a spouse. When there is death, there is liberty. You are at liberty to remarry.

DEATH RELEASES US FROM LAW

Death releases us from the Law. Marriage and adultery are here simply as an illustration. The concept Paul is teaching in this passage is the same concept he's been teaching since Romans 3:20. Namely that salvation is not about observing the Law. No one will be saved by doing works of the law. In various ways, Paul says in these six verses that we are released from the law five times. Death releases us from the law.

YOU HAVE DIED

Ok, but I'm still alive. Am I still bound by the law? In **verse 4** Paul says, **Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ...** Look back over at Romans 6:3-4, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death..."

We are united with Him in His death. *"We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing..." Romans 6:6*

Just as in Adam all sinned (5:12), so in Christ all died. As Paul made clear with the example of marriage, when there is a death, there is release.

Christ died as our substitute. We call this vicarious atonement. He died in our place. And because He died in our place, Paul sees that in a very real sense we also died with Him. Because we died with Him, we were released from the law as a means of salvation. Our salvation comes not through observing the law, for *"by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight..." Romans 3:20*

Martin Luther called the law our "schoolmaster," as 3:20 concludes, it gives us "knowledge of sin." R.C. Sproul says the law "strips away all pretense of our moral ability to reach heaven by our works." It is no longer binding on those who have been put to death with Christ.

Specifically, Paul says we have been put to death to the law **through the body of Christ**. Taking bread, thanking God for it, breaking it, and handing it to His disciple at the last supper, Jesus said, *"This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* Luke 22:19

Jesus took on real human flesh, becoming like us in bodily form, fully man, yet fully divine. His body was broken & crucified. His blood was poured out because without the shedding of blood, there is no atonement for sin. Jesus did not die symbolically, metaphorically, or allegorically. He died literally in His body.

THAT YOU MAY BELONG TO ANOTHER & BEAR FRUIT FOR GOD

The death He died literally, we died vicariously. Because we died with Him, we **died to the law**. In this sense we were married to the law; we were under a covenant with the law. But we died, and in our death, we were released from that covenant with the law...**so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.**

Because we have died and have been released from the law, we are free to **belong to another**; The Church, composed of all believers everywhere, is united to Christ as a bride to a groom. We enter a covenant relationship with Him, bound to Him.

We have been released from the law, bound to Christ. And the purpose of our union with Christ is that we would **bear fruit for God**. Throughout scripture, we find the principle that a faithful life is a fruitful life. The blessed man in Psalm 1 is, *"like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season."* Psalm 1:1

Jesus said that *"every healthy tree bears good fruit."* Matthew 7:17 In the parable of the sower, the healthy soil that received the seed, the one who heard and understood the Gospel, bore fruit, as much as one hundred times what was sown. Matthew 13:3-8

Elsewhere Paul and James each instruct us to bear good fruit for God. *"so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."* Colossians 1:10

Notice that good fruit is one of the examples of what it means to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, that and growing in our knowledge of Him. I think it is safe to say that

one is not living in a manner worthy of the Lord if they are not bearing good fruit for Him and not coming into deeper, more intimate knowledge of Him.

James links wisdom and good fruit, saying that good fruit is the product of wisdom from above.

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” James 3:17

So the Lord desires that we bear good fruit and grow in our knowledge of Him. Knowledge of Him is akin to wisdom from above, and wisdom from above produces good fruit. I suppose this is why Jesus tells us that all who seek will find. If you desire to know God more deeply and to live a life worthy of Him, and bear good fruit for Him, seek Him and ask Him. He delights to answer this sincere prayer of His children. You have not because you ask not, James says.

I caution you from being content with “having not” in this situation. In perhaps what was a sober prophetic warning against contentment with fruitlessness, in Matthew 21 Jesus cursed a fruitless fig tree. What’s the point of a fig tree that does not bear fruit for Jesus?

WHAT FRUIT?

What is the fruit Jesus seeks? Is it not obedience? Holiness? Is He not looking for a life lived pleasing to God? *“But 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.” Romans 6:22*

Elsewhere Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit, *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23*

The Lord is going to inspect our lives for fruit and the only way we can bear good fruit is that we’ve died with Christ and been released from the law.

Verse 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. Observe the concept – a life lived striving to obey the law is a life lived in the flesh, a life of sinful passions. That is an non sequitur to me.

This would have been a pretty shocking statement to the original audience, especially the Jewish hearers. They believed the Law prevented people from sinning. Think about your own paradigm – if you just follow the Bible you’ll be a good person, right?

Paul contends that the law actually entices people to sin. It’s not the law that Paul finds fault with. The law is the perfect will of God. *“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple...” Psalm 19:7*

Paul even says in the next passage, *“So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” Romans 7:12* We cannot deny that the law is good. We, like David, ought to delight in the law and meditate on it night and day. The problem is not the law. The problem is you and me in our broken flesh. *“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.” Romans 8:3*

WHAT THE LAW CANNOT DO

That’s the key. The law is not able to do something – it cannot keep you from breaking it. When you’re told you cannot do something, what do you want to do? The thing you’re not supposed to do. Your flesh is aroused by the law.

Man’s problem with the law has been that he has approached the law from a position of thinking he can fulfill it rather than coming to it and humbly recognizing that it’s impossible and faithfully crying out for mercy. *“Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.” Psalm 86:11-12*

David, who loved the law of God, had to admit that the only way he could worship God with all his heart is if God gave him an undivided heart for Him. That's honest. That's the right approach.

After committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband murdered on the frontlines, David cried out to God, *"Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."* Psalm 51:9-10 Create in me a pure heart. You have to do something that I simply cannot do. You have to give me an undivided, pure heart and only then can I worship you and praise you and live a life honoring to you.

Once again, Paul reminds us that we commit sin with **our members**. By them we **bear fruit for death**. Every sin we commit, we commit with our body. Thus, we poison ourselves.

It is the alcoholic's own hand that lifts the drink. His own mouth that receives and swallows. It is the pornographer's fingers that type the URL. It is the gamblers feet that walk him into the casino. It's the rebel's mind that plots evil. It is the gossip's tongue that spews vile.

SOMETHING HAS CHANGED

But that has changed in Christ. That's who we were, but when a person is born again, we aren't the same as we were. We no longer desire what we once desired. This is the new life we were raised to walk in when we were raised with Christ. We died with Christ in His body. And we were raised with **Him who has been raised from the dead. (verse 4)**

If you have been put to death with Christ in His body, then you have been raised with Him in new life. This is what we call regeneration. Anyone who has been justified, has been made new. And because we have been made new, we live life a new way.

Verse 6 says **But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.** We died and we were **released from the law** so that we might belong to another and to walk with Him in newness of life.

We **died to that which held us captive**. We were enslaved to sin and *"...the power of sin is the law."* 1 Corinthians 15:56 We were, in a very real sense, held captive by the law because of our sin nature. But in Christ we have been released from the law! Not to live however we want, but to **serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code**. We no longer seek our salvation by service and obedience to the law.

The law points us to Jesus, who fulfilled the law perfectly. Thus, we serve our master, Jesus **in the new way of the Spirit**. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and led by Him.

What was prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel has been fulfilled in Christ. In Jeremiah 31 God promised that He would make a new covenant with His people, and He would write His law on our hearts.

Ezekiel 36 shows us how, *"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."* Ezekiel 36:26-27

God will do a work in our hearts, giving us a new heart, just as David requested – an undivided and pure heart. Beyond that God will put His own Spirit within each of His people and His Spirit will cause us to walk in His statutes. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the life of every born-again believer, causes that person to be changed, to bear fruit. We don't will ourselves to bear fruit. God works in us to bear fruit. We submit ourselves to the Spirit. But that too is a fruit of being indwelt by Him.

Years ago I noticed that a large tree in my front yard wasn't looking like the other trees around it. It wasn't quite as full, or as green. I let it go a few years, each spring hoping and praying it was still alive and would snap out of whatever condition was holding its leaves from budding. I kept holding on

because there was some green, some signs of life, just not like the others. When I finally got up close enough to inspect it, I realized the green I was seeing was from a vine growing on my dead tree. Then I cut the tree down.

There are people in the church who are like that dead tree with vines growing on it. It had some appearance of life, but it was not bearing fruit. It was dead. These people attend church and do all the things. They appear to be alive. But the words of Jesus in Matthew 7 terrify me for them. Many will do all sorts of things in Jesus name, but when it really counts, they will tragically be sent away from Him. "I never knew you," Jesus will say, "depart from me you workers of lawlessness." That's possibly the most tragic verse in the entire Bible to me.

It is not enough to look like alive. You must be born again.

Paul has just contrasted the life of a believer with the life of a non-believer. Believers bear fruit for God. They're growing. They're being changed by His Spirit. They're living for God.

Released from the law and bound to Christ, Christ is at the center of their lives. He dominates their thoughts, their motives, their words, their attitudes, their actions. Jesus is everything to a born-again believer. Is He everything to you? If not, no matter what you're doing in His name, no matter how much you serve the law, it will all count for nothing. If you want to bear fruit for God, you must be released from the law and bound to Christ. Will you cry out to Him with earnest today?

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