

Dead To Law, Alive In Christ

(Romans 7:1-14)

Intro: In Romans 6, verse 14 Paul stated a fundamental principle that relates to the Christian's sanctification, and the place of the Law in a believer's life: "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace." This verse actually provides the key to understanding chapters 6 and 7. The sixth chapter dealt with the first half of this verse "*Sin shall not be master over you.*" The second half of the verse "*you are not under law, but under grace,*" is the subject of chapter 7. Chapter 6 is about the believer's death to the ruling power of sin. Chapter 7 is about the believer's death to the Law.

Paul is going to show that the only way believer's can experience true sanctification (victory over sin plus the production of positive righteousness) is by grace (the work of God in Christ) and never by obedience to law. While "the Law is holy, and the commandment not to covet is holy and righteous and good" (v. 12); the Law was never intended to provide men with holiness. The Mosaic Law was instituted by God to reveal His holiness to His people, and to show them their utter sinfulness, and need for a Savior. The Law cannot transform our old sinful nature; it can only reveal how utterly sinful our old nature is. What is more, it is impossible to obey the Law because it incites my sin nature to sin, which leads to death (v. 11).

Paul raises three questions in this section: First, Is the believer under Law? (vv. 1-6); Second, Is the Law sinful? (vv. 7-12); Third, Is the Law a cause of death? (vv. 13-14)

I. Is The Believer Under Law? (vv. 1-6)

A. The established principle (vv. 1-3)

Paul states an established principle in verse 1, one which all would agree with, that the law has jurisdiction over a person only so long as they live.

7:1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?

Most commentators are of the opinion that the words "Or do you not know, brethren" here in verse 1 link with what Paul said in the fourteenth verse of the

previous chapter: “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.” Paul was addressing those who knew the law. They knew the Law because it was constantly read and expounded in their services. Having established the principle that death renders the law inoperative, he illustrates this principle in verses 2 and 3 through the marriage relationship.

v. 2 For the 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.
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.

This illustration is a simple one, but it has caused some commentators to get all shook up. The problem is they get all tangled up as they try to identify everyone in the illustration, and they end up losing sight of Paul’s simple point. It only gets confusing if we try to press every detail. Paul is simply illustrating a point. The point of Paul’s little story is that the Law is for the living. This is the established principle he introduced in verse 1, and is now illustrating in verses 2 and 3 through the marriage law. As you all know this is the principle God established from the beginning, when He created Adam and Eve. This is God’s ideal for marriage, one man for one woman for life. This is what God established in the Garden of Eden. Jesus reaffirmed this principle during His earthly ministry. And the Apostle Paul assumes it to be true here in this passage. He takes this established principle and uses it to make his point.

In Jewish society a married woman was bound to her husband as long as he was alive. She was not permitted to divorce her husband. However, if her husband died, she was released from the law of marriage. She would be free from the bond of marriage to marry another man. Why, because the law of marriage was for the living.

B. The application of the principle to believers (vv. 4-6)

v. 4 Therefore, my brethren [and sisters], you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.

This is the same great truth introduced in chapter 6—when we trusted Christ as our Savior from sin, we were identified with Him in His death (6:3-7). We died to our old life in Adam, and were raised up to a new life with Christ. Now Paul

is teaching us that when we died to that old life, when we died to sin, we also died to the Old Testament Mosaic Law. Do you see it in verse 4—“Therefore, brothers and sisters you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ.” Again, the point here is that in Jesus Christ we died not only to the ruling power of sin, but also to the Old Testament Mosaic Law.

Perhaps the following story will help: **Married to Mr. Law or Mr. Grace?**

I was once married to Mr. Law. He was a good man, in his way, but he did not understand my weaknesses. He came home every evening and asked, “So, how was your day? Did you do what I told you to? Did you make the kids behave? Did you waste any time? Did you complete everything I put on your To Do list?” So many demands and expectations. And hard as I tried, I couldn’t be perfect. I could never satisfy him. I forgot things that were important to him. I let the children misbehave. I failed in other ways. It was a miserable marriage, because Mr. Law always pointed out my failings. And the worst of it was, he was always right! But his remedy was always the same: Do better tomorrow. The sad truth is, I didn’t, because I couldn’t.

Then Mr. Law died. And I eventually remarried. This time to a wonderful man named Mr. Grace. My new husband, Jesus, comes home every evening and the house is sometimes a mess, the children have been naughty, dinner is burning on the stove. Still, he sweeps me into His arms and says, “I love you, I chose you, I died for you, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” And my heart melts. I don’t understand such love. I expect Him to despise me and reject me and humiliate me, but He treats me so wonderfully well. I am so glad to belong to Him now and forever, and I now live so as to be “fully pleasing to him” (Col. 1:10)!

Being married to Mr. Law never changed me or the kids. But being married to Mr. Grace is changing us all deep within, and it shows.

Paul’s point here in chapter 7 is that as believers we have been released from the Mosaic Law. God has cut us loose from the Law and joined us to Jesus Christ, and we now live our Christian lives to bear fruit for God. He goes on to explain in verses 5-6 that prior to our being saved, we were under the authority of God’s Law, and yet we sinned continually.

5 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.

Notice that our true enemy is our own flesh. Paul says, that prior to our being saved, while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions within me, were actually aroused by the Law. Have you ever noticed that when you are told not to do something, or you must not do something, that is exactly what you want to do? This is Paul's point here. The Law actually stirs up sinful passions within me, which causes the various members of my body to bear fruit for death.

Whereas verse 5 describes our former unhappy state as lost sinners, verse 6 describes our present happy state as Christians who have been released from bondage to the Law through Jesus Christ.

6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Again, as believers in Jesus Christ, we have died to the Law by which we were previously bound. The result is that we now serve in newness of the Holy Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. Our new life in Christ has delivered us from our former slavery to sin, and we are now able to live for God through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

II. Is The Law Evil? (vv. 7-12)

A. The question about the Law (v. 7a)

The fact that believers have been released from the Law would raise a serious question in the minds of Paul's Jewish opponents, v. 7a

v. 7a What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?

Paul's argument in the first 6 verses would have caused sincere Jewish Christians to ask this question. Paul responds with his customary *megenaito*, **May it never be!** or **God forbid!**

If the Law is not sin, then what purpose did it serve in Israel's history. Paul explains that the Law of God serves three purposes: it reveals sin, it provokes sin, but most importantly, it reveals God's Holy nature.

B. The Law reveals sin (v. 7b)

v. 7b I would not have come to know sin except through the Law.

The Law acts like a mirror that reveals to us our inner man, and shows us how dirty we truly are. The Law provokes or incites my fallen nature, inherited from Adam, to sin, vv. 7b-11

C. The Law provokes sin (vv. 7c-11)

v. 7c For I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.”

Paul used coveting to illustrate his point. This is the last of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:17), and it differs from the other nine in that it denounces an inward attitude, and not an outward action.

Covetousness acts as a gateway into human nature for the invading forces of sin. We see something our neighbor has that we don't and we begin to covet—we wish we had what our neighbor has. Covetousness usually leads to idolatry, because we put our desire for things above God. Paul explains the progression of how sin works in verse 8

v. 8 But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, Do Not Covet, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

The culprit is not the commandment forbidding covetousness, but sin. When I am told I can't do something, my sinful nature wants to do what I am told I cannot do.

STOP. I know you're thinking about crossing this gate. What you should know is that if the Coyotes, Cactus, Mesquite, Heat, Dust or Rattlers don't get you, I will.

“No trespassing” sign in west Texas, with rancher's name signed in blood red paint at bottom.

Paul continues in verses 9-11 that there was a time in his life when he thought he was alive apart from the Law, but since coming to faith in Christ, he had come to understand how sin abused the commandment not to covet.

9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; **10** and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; **11** for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.

Paul had come to realize the nefarious nature of sin, and that apart from the grace of Jesus Christ, he would be condemned to death. The commandment forbidding covetousness was designed to bring life, but it turned out to be a sentence of death.

Verse 12 provides Paul's definitive answer to the question raised in verse **7a** What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?

D. The Law reveals God's holy nature (v. 12)

v. 12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Paul concludes in verse 12 that The Mosaic Law is holy, good, and spiritual. It was, however, only temporary as the book of Hebrews so clearly teaches. As such, the Mosaic Law was designed to maintain a proper relationship between God and His people Israel (blessing versus cursing Deut, 28), but only until the coming of Messiah and the establishment of a New Covenant. The Law was never designed to be a permanent rule of life. It was merely a tutor or guardian to guide Israel in all areas of her life until Christ (2 Cor. 3:7, 11; Gal. 3:23-24; Rom. 10:4).

Paul deals with one further question concerning the Law in verses 13-14

III. Is The Law A Cause Of Death? (vv. 13-14)

13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? ***Megen-oito*** **May it never be!** Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

Paul rejected the implication that the Law, which is holy and good, became a cause of death for him. He points out that it was sin, and not the Law that brings about death. Again, the Law was and is simply the instrument used by

sin to accomplish its damaging purposes. The Commandment not to covet, which is good, caused sin to reveal its true character as sin.

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

Paul concludes with a declaration that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

Conclusion:

It is clear that as long as we live in these earthy tabernacles of flesh, we will do battle with sin. If we are to gain mastery over our sinful flesh, we must rely on the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We must spend time in God's Word, and in His holy presence in prayer. Paul has made it clear that we cannot obey God's commandments in our flesh, but only through the power of God's indwelling Spirit.

Listen to the early Church Father Augustine's progressive battle with sin:

1. Lord make me good, but not yet.
2. Lord make me good, but not entirely.
3. Lord make me good.

Where are you in your progressive battle with sin?

Are you spending time in God's Word every day?

If you can't read it, listen to it. Download Oneplace.com.

Tune the radio in your car to a Christian Radio station that provides solid Bible-based teaching.

Join us on Wednesday nights for good fellowship and Bible teaching.

Join a weekly men or women's Bible study.

Prayer:

Closing song: ***Break Every Chain***