

Romans

Bible Study

Dead to the Law

Romans 7:1—6

Romans chapters 6, 7 and 8 are very important for the believer. They give us critical understanding of our new position in Christ, and how we are able to live out lives bearing fruit for the Lord. Chapter 6 dwells on our close relationship with Christ. Since we have been baptized into Christ, we are identified with Him. He died therefore we have died. He was resurrected, therefore we have been resurrected, at least in God's eyes until we personally experience that resurrection.

It is important to understand the concept of being dead in Christ. First, our flesh, the old nature, has been put to death. We are no longer a slave to unrighteousness and sin. Before being saved our only option was to sin. As believers, the Holy Spirit has cut off that sinful body so we don't need to follow the fleshly desires that serve self (Colossians 2:11). We are now slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18) so we can walk in the Spirit and live a life pleasing to God.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the believer being dead to sin while chapter 7 begins Paul's focus on the believer being dead to the Law.

Sin, death and the Law

Sin, death and the Law are all interconnected. It was sin that brought death into the world (Romans 5:12). As soon as Adam sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit, death dominated mankind (Romans 5:14). This is why we see the phrase, "and he died" repeated over and over in the book of Genesis. It is a reminder of the terrible result of one man's sin.

The Law is connected to sin and death because it was the Law that made sin more sinful (Romans 7:13). The only thing the Law could do was bring condemnation and death (2 Corinthians 3:7—9). There was nothing within the Law that made it possible for a person to please God. It is merely a righteousness monitor that tells a person he doesn't meet God's standards, but with no power to correct unrighteous behavior or thoughts. It points out sin but does nothing to bring a person closer to God.

The Law and marriage

Paul speaks to people who understand the Law by using marriage as a metaphor to help explain the relationship the Law has to people. In marriage, under the Mosaic Law, the married woman was bound to her husband as long as he was alive. Once her husband died, she was now free from any ties to her husband and she was then able to join with another man in marriage. If she married another man while married to her first husband then she would be considered an adulteress.

The Mosaic Law rules over people who are unsaved. The Jews understood this quite well since it affected every aspect of their lives. Even today, the Law rules over unbelievers, condemning those who are not saved. (1 Timothy 1:9—10). Even people only familiar with the 10 Commandments know they have not lived up to God's standards. It condemns, but gives no remedial recourse. Like marriage, unbelievers are bound to the Law and there is no way for them to break loose from this union, other than through death. This also applies to the Law. When the unbeliever dies, he is no longer bound to the Law because his union with the Law has been broken. For the believer, death to the Law happened the moment that person was baptized into

Christ, becoming fully identified with Him in His death. Since the believer has died with Christ, he is no longer united to the Law, but is instead united with Christ.

Married to Christ

Paul uses some interesting terminology that is often misused and misinterpreted. Just like many misuse him speaking of being baptized into Christ to be referring to water in Romans 6, speaking of being married to Christ in Romans 7:4. Most would say we will be married to Christ at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb at the Second Coming. Once that happens, we will be ruling with Him in the Millennial Kingdom on this earth. However, reading carefully what Paul is saying in Romans 7, an unbeliever is married (joined) to the Law. When a Person becomes a believer, he is no longer married to the Law, but is instead married (joined) to Christ. This union has already happened and there is no additional union that must happen. If we are united with Christ when we are saved, why would we need to be united with Him at the Second Coming? This argument doesn't even address that the Second Coming has nothing to do with the Church, the Body of Christ, but is focused on Israel and their final uniting with their Messiah. We are already as united with Christ as we will ever be.

Being united with Christ means we are no longer united with the Law. The Law brings death while Christ brings life. The only thing we were able to produce when under the Law was the fruit of sin and death (Romans 7:5). Now, we are free from the Law. Since we are free, we are capable of serving God in this new life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead of being held hostage by the letter of the Law, we are given the power to live in this program of Grace producing fruit that is pleasing to the Lord (Romans 7:4). If we try to bear fruit for God through following the Law, we are doing so only through the carnal flesh, the old nature. The only way for us to bear fruit is by considering our old nature dead and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through us. He can change our thinking by bringing the word of God to life as we assimilate it through study. This is the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). This renewing of the mind allows us to live a life free from the slavery of the Law and able to operate in the power of the new man given to us when we were saved (Ephesians 4:22—24).

We study Paul's writings so that we will know how to please the Lord and bear fruit for Him. When we have rightly divided Scriptural knowledge, we will be given spiritual understanding and wisdom in knowing how to apply this knowledge. We will then be able to walk in a manner that is constant with our position in Christ. Out of this, we will be producing fruit in every good work (Colossians 1:9—10).

This life free of sin, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit should be the normal Christian life. There is no room for sin because we have been set free from the bondage of sin. The more we learn about our position in Christ and the extent of God's great love, the more we will be compelled to serve Him (2 Corinthians 5:14).

A word about divorce

Paul speaks of the woman who is bound to her husband until death (verses 2—3). Many use passages such as this to build a case that we, in this Dispensation of Grace are to never divorce, and if a person has divorced it is wrong to remarry until the spouse has died. These are all ordinances under the Mosaic Law and do not have any dominion over the believer today. Paul makes it clear that it is never right for a woman to marry another person while still married (1 Corinthians 7:10), but he never disallows remarriage after the first marriage has been terminated.

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