

Week #3 – New Freedom from the Law¹ *Romans 7:1-12*

Key Concepts:

An Illustration from Marriage
Death to the Law, i.e. Marriage with Christ
The Law is not Sinful

Background (*Romans 6*)

As a believer in Christ, you have been granted a new **identity** in Christ. You are now positioned to live victoriously over sin as you **present** yourselves as a slave of God. This new position should change the way you live your life.

You are now able to **yield** yourselves to the Holy Spirit for obedience to God's will. Nevertheless, just because you are now able to obey God does not mean that the spiritual life is **easy**; you will struggle.

An Illustration from Marriage (*Romans 7:1-3*)

v. 1 – Paul looks back to *Romans 6:14b* and following where the term “law” is last mentioned.

The “law” refers to the **Mosaic** Law, not the Roman law. Paul's readers would have understood this.²

vv. 2-3 – The marriage or contractual language here is illustrative and represents the spiritual or positional **change** experienced by those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ:

¹ Or “Freedom from the Law's Condemnation.” See C.E.B. Cranfield; *Romans*, ICC, i, 330ff.

² “Gentile Christians as well as Jewish could no doubt be assumed to have some knowledge of the OT law.” Cranfield, 333.

The *law of marriage* applies to the "wife" as long as there is a "husband."
The *Mosaic Law* applies to a person as long as there is an "old man."

The *law of marriage* ceases to apply to the wife when the husband dies.
The *Mosaic Law* ceases to apply to a person when the "old man" dies.

The wife/widow is no longer bound by the *law of marriage*.
The "new man" is no longer bound by the *Mosaic Law*.

Ultimately, Paul is demonstrating how death has **released** us from the contractual obligation to obey the Law as well as the condemnation that results from disobeying the law. We are no longer **required** to obey the law for our spiritual growth.

Questions:

1. Why is "the Law" here in Romans 7 referring to the Mosaic Law and not the Roman Law?
2. What is the significance of remembering that the "husband" died?

Death to the Law, i.e. Marriage with Christ (*Romans 7:4-6*)

v. 4 – The result of our new **union** with Christ is our death to the law.³

The purpose of our new union with Christ is **fruit** to/for God.

v. 5 – Before our new union/identification with Christ, the result of our old life in the **flesh** was fruit for death.

v. 6 – The "newness of the Spirit" refers to a new **quality** of living or obedience, which is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives (cf. *Romans 2:27-29*; *2 Corinthians 3:18*).

³ Note that our "dying" to the law is related to, but distinct from our "dying" to sin (*Romans 6:2*).

Questions:

1. Does the "body of Christ" here refer to the church or Christ's physical body on the cross?
2. If our former life was "in the flesh" (*Romans 7:5*), why does Paul indicate that we still struggle with "the flesh" (*Romans 7:18, 25*)?

The Law is not Sinful (*Romans 7:7-12*)

Paul contrasts the Law and sin:

	<u>Sin</u>	<u>Paul</u>
<i>Before the Law</i>	Dead	Alive
<i>After the Law</i>	Alive	Dead

v. 7 – The law educates us on what not to do, therefore, we are **tempted** to do it. Paul is probably referring to the **Ten Commandments** (or Decalogue) rather than the entire Old Testament.

Specific commandment:

"You shall not **covet**" (*Ex. 20:17, Deut 5:21*).

Covet = to desire what belongs to another which cannot be ours.

Why did Paul choose "coveting?"⁴

- 1) Coveting is a matter of the **heart**.
- 2) Coveting is a sin of the **flesh**.⁵
- 3) Coveting is a sin which causes other sins.
- 4) Coveting is hardly understood as wrong other than in God's law.
- 5) Coveting aids in the interpretation of vv. 9-11.

⁴ See Bob Deffinbaugh, "The Loveliness of the Law and the Ugliness of Sin," www.bible.org.

⁵ Gal 5:16, 19; Eph 2:3; 2 Pet 2:10.

vv. 8-9 – “Sin” refers to an active “force” within us that produces sinful **tendencies** within us. Sin is “dead” or inactive apart from the law. Once we know the law, however, we naturally desire to do the **forbidden**. Paul was “alive” apart from the law because he was unaware of his own **spiritual** deadness.

v. 10-11 – The Mosaic Law would result in blessing/life if it was followed **completely**.

Excursus: vv. 9-11; What was Paul talking about?

Facts:

- v. 9 1) The “I” refers to Paul – Paul’s personal experience.
- 2) Paul was once alive apart from the law.
- 3) A commandment came.
- v. 10 4) The commandment was supposed to bring life.
- v. 11 5) Sin deceived Paul; Paul disobeyed the commandment.
- 6) Paul’s sin resulted in his death.

A Possible Explanation: “Paul was speaking of his personal experience, in Adam, at the fall, described in Genesis 2 and 3 and Romans 5.”⁶

v. 12 – *Conclusion:* the law is not **evil**, but holy, righteous, and good. We are at fault because of our **tendency** towards evil and sin.

Thoughts Leading to Application

- 1) Our relationship with sin began with our identity in **Adam** and our deliverance from sin’s dominion began with our identity in **Christ**.

- 2) Our struggle with sin is against our **flesh**, so we are responsible for our sin not Satan or evil demons.

⁶ Deffinbaugh; Gen 2:9, 16-19, 3:6. Another possible view is that Paul was “using the first person singular in a generalizing way without intending a specific reference to any particular individual ... in order to depict vividly the situation of man in absence of the law and in its presence.” Paul clearly communicated “his deep sense of personal involvement” with the struggle of sin. Cranfield; 342 and 344.

Questions:

1. What does Paul mean when he writes that he was “alive apart from the law” (*Romans 7:9*)?
2. If the law is not evil, then how is it able to conjure up evil desires in us (*Romans 7:5*)? Do you see this principle at work in your own life?

Conclusion

While the Mosaic Law is holy, we are freed from the law; we are no longer obligated to keep it because of our new union with Jesus Christ (cf. *Galatians 2:19-21*). While the Mosaic Law is holy and good, it makes us aware of sin because it defines sin. As a result, we naturally desire to carry out sin in our lives because of our bent towards rebellion.

Definition of the “Spiritual Life:”

Part 1: “*Understanding your identity in Christ ...*”

Part 2: “*... as a slave to righteousness ...*”

Part 3: “*... who has been released from the Law ...*”

Key Terms:

The Law
Dying to/Being released from the Law
Newness/New way of the Spirit
Oldness/Old way of the Law/letter

Key Verses:

Romans 7:6
Romans 2:27-29
Galatians 2:19-21

Scripture Memory:

“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.”
(*Romans 7:6*, NASB).

Homework Assignment #3:

- 1) Memorize *Romans 7:6*.
- 2) **NextStep APPLICATION:** Does knowledge of the forbidden urge you to disobey (i.e. sin)? When you recognize your tendency to disobey, stop and ask the Lord for wisdom on how to proceed in an obedient fashion. Realize that while a “law” of any kind might stir up our sinful tendency, we do not have to give into it. Remember, you have a new identity with Jesus Christ. Live like it this week!
- 3) Review class notes.

Next Week: Wrestling with Sin (*Romans 7:13-8:4*)

“Teaser” Questions:

1. Even though we are no longer required to keep the Mosaic Law, is there value in studying it? Why or why not?
2. Why do we often struggle to avoid sin and live obediently to God? Are we saints? Sinners? Both?