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Romans

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? Romans 7:1

It has been made abundantly clear in Chapter 6 that we are no longer slaves to sin, but to righteousness; we have died with Christ and shall also live with Him; death has no dominion over Him and therefore it no longer has dominion over us. Can I get an amen?

Now in chapter 7, we will be shown our relationship to the law. If we get this chapter wrong, we will have a confused idea about what we can and cannot do. Churches all over the world levy requirements from the Law of Moses onto their congregants because they fail to grasp and adhere to the precepts found in this chapter (and which are explained elsewhere in Paul's writings).

Chapter 6 explicitly said that in Christ we "are not under law but under grace." (v14) Chapter 7 will show us how this happened and will demonstrate that the law has no authority over, or claim on us. Pay heed to Paul's words because the law is "all or nothing." If we are under the law, we are obligated to the whole law, every precept of it (James 2:10). If we are not under the law, then no part of it has a claim on us. We cannot "pick and choose" which part of the law is still required and which isn't as so many within the church attempt to do.

And so to set the tone for his argument, today he begins with "Or do you not know?" This is a rhetorical question to be taken as a statement of fact - "Surely

you realize this truth." After this he explains his position to his "brethren." Although he is writing to all within the church and his words are doctrine for all, he is directing his comments to those who "know the law." This would be the Jewish brethren who have an understanding of what the law is clear about.

"Surely you realize this truth from within the law itself..." And then he brings up a precept from the law which is as obvious as it could be, "that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives." A person born under the law is obligated to that law; the law has dominion over you.

The term "has dominion" is the Greek *kyrieuei*. The word is one of ruling. Paul has personified the Law to show a comparison to what he already demonstrated in chapter 6 when he personified Sin and Righteousness. The term "as long as he lives" can also rightly be translated "as long as it lives." The ambiguity is certainly to show the truth from either direction. As long as a man is alive, the law has ruling authority over him. Or, as long as the law is in effect, it has ruling authority over the man, but if it is abrogated, it no longer applies. However, based on the comparison he will make in the coming verses, the translation "as long as he lives" is the intent of the passage.

Life application: If you are under the law, it has dominion over you. If you die, you are free from the constraint of the law. Likewise, if the law is abrogated, you are free from its constraint. Think on this and apply it to your Christian walk. Either a law applies or it doesn't. If it does, it does so entirely. If it doesn't then it is of no effect.

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.
Romans 7:2

In his ever-consistent writings, Paul confirms his words in this verse in another verse found in 1 Corinthians 7:39 -

"A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."

This is an obvious truth. The marriage of a woman to a man binds her to that husband. He is the head of the family, both under the law and also within the New Testament context (Ephesians 5:23 for example). Being bound to that husband means that she has vowed to perform her duties as a wife and be faithful to him. However, the death of the husband releases her from his headship; she is no longer bound to him.

This simple example of the husband/wife relationship will be used in order to demonstrate a truth concerning our relationship to the law. The Bible uses such simple examples to keep us from mistaking deeper theological truths. Unfortunately, even such simplicity is often overlooked or ignored in an attempt to continue on down improper paths of our relationship with Christ. Endeavor to not be swayed by those who would follow such avenues of disobedience.

Life application: When an object lesson is given in the Bible, it is done so that we can see easy-to-understand concepts of issues that are often complex or which could otherwise lead to heresy if ignored. Pay close attention to such simplicity because it will guide you as you wade into deeper theological waters.

So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Romans 7:3

"So then if" takes into consideration the previous verse. That a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. However, should he die before she does, then she is no longer bound to him, but if he is alive she remains bound to him.... So then if, while in this state, she marries somebody else, she "will be called" an adulterous.

The Geneva Bible says, "That is, she will be an adulteress, by the consent and judgment of all men." She not only is "called an adulterous" as if she were somehow being improperly maligned, but she is called it as a matter of fact. She has betrayed her vow to her husband and before God.

However, Paul continues - if her husband dies before she does, then the law which bound her to him dies with him; she is free from the obligation and the vow which made them one. Even though she has a new husband, nobody can mark her as an adulteress. She is free to commit herself to him, wholly and entirely. This example is given to show us a theological truth which will be explained in the verse to come.

Life application: As you are bound to your spouse while they live, live as if they live. Be faithful in your marriage and in your promise which you spoke before your Creator.

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. Romans 7:4

"Therefore..." Because of the contents of verses 1-3, we can now make the necessary connection. He addresses "my brethren." This is the same as was noted in verse 1. Although this applies to all within the church, he is speaking to those "who know the law." To clear up any confusion among Jewish believers, and to instruct the gentiles in the church who might otherwise be inclined to listen to wrong assumptions which those Jewish believers might come to and then teach, he gives his concluding analysis of this thought, "you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ."

He has been speaking about a woman's connection to a man through the bonds of marriage. When the husband is alive, she is bound to the husband through law. If the husband dies, then her obligation to the husband dies with him. Likewise, when Christ died, who is the embodiment and fulfillment of the law, those under

the law "became dead to the law" through His body. How this can be misunderstood is almost beyond imagination. It is as clear as the ink on the paper. And yet, throughout history, people have attempted to "reinsert" the law, or selected portions of it as they pick and choose. Thus they reject Paul's clear and obvious analogy.

Christ has released us from the law, completely and entirely. It is done. It is over. It is finished. It is set aside. It is obsolete. It is replaced. Can we not comprehend this? Rejecting this premise is a rejection of the work of Christ. He has freed us by justifying us. He has freed us from the law's penalty. He has removed the curse of the law from touching us again.

The death of the law is clearly noted in Colossians 2:14 - "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."

Everything that stood against us is nailed to the tree. Why should we somehow desire to remove the nail and reject His cross when He has triumphed over it for us? Instead, we are now "married to another." If we were "married to" or obligated to the law, which is God's standard, and the law is dead to us, then let us now be "married to another--to Him who was raised from the dead." Of course this is Jesus. Only He fulfilled the law. The wages of sin is death; He never sinned; therefore, death couldn't hold Him. Our marriage to Him is to the One who embodies the law. Our fulfillment of the law is in Him, not in our futile attempts to meet its demands.

Because we are married to Him, let us "bear fruit to God." How do we do this? By honoring the Son. God is glorified when we call on Him, live for Him, and fulfill His will for our lives. Attempting to be justified by the law that He has fulfilled for us is to reject His work. In essence, it is saying to God, "I don't need Jesus, I have this one covered on my own." This isn't bearing fruit to God; it is dishonoring to Him.

If you see the logical progression of what Paul is writing, he went from speaking of our justification in chapter 5, to our slave-master relationship in chapter 6, and now to our marital status to Christ in chapter 7. All of this is directing us to how we are to interact with God through Christ. We are justified in Christ, we are slaves to Christ, not the law; and we are married to Christ because the law is dead to us.

Life application: Stand firm! Anytime someone tries to reinsert the law - any precept of it, then reject their words. If they say you can't eat a baloney sandwich or you must tithe, then correct them. If they ask why you don't have a Saturday Sabbath, then instruct them. In the end, it is all the law or none. Find a precept they don't adhere to (such as offering animal sacrifices, or wearing clothes sewn with two types of material) and show them the illogical nature of their partial adherence to the law. It is all Christ, or it is no-Christ.

For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. Romans 7:5

The term "for when" introduces a continuing explanation of the previous verses, particularly verse 4. We have become dead to the law through the body of Christ. This is so that we may be "married to another" - because death nullifies the previous marriage. Now that we are in this state, we are to "bear fruit to God." This is the thought of verse 4 and now, "For when" is given to show us the contrast in the type of fruit from then and now.

"For when we were in the flesh" must mean when we were under law and prior to our spiritual rebirth. It can mean nothing else based on the context of what has been given. Therefore, "the flesh" is life under the law and its attempts to merit God's favor apart from Christ. And what was the result? "The sinful passions which were aroused by the law..." How does the law arouse passions? To answer, we head right back to Romans 3:20 -

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

There is no sin where no law has been given. However, with the giving of the law comes the knowledge of sin. And in violating the law, our members are working in a way which will "bear fruit to death." As was noted in Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death."

- 1) The law is introduced
- 2) The knowledge of sin comes through the introduction of the law
- 3) A violation of the law is an act of the individual which then deserves payment
- 4) The wages of sin is death
- 5) Therefore, the fruit of death has been borne through the law

Paul has been consistent in his thoughts as he has progressed through his letter. Each step is working towards a fuller understanding of what it means to be "in Christ" and free from the constraints of the law. Pay heed to what is given and apply it to your life and doctrine. Romans is a foundational letter of what it means to be a Christian.

Life application: Do you want to be a follower of Jesus Christ who is pleasing to God? Then properly apply New Testament doctrine to your walk. In particular, Paul's epistles show us proper doctrine for the church age. Read them often, think on them always.

But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Romans 7:6

"But now"... We are introduced to a contrast from the preceding verse which said - "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death."

The law, which aroused in us sinful passions, is behind us. We "have been delivered from" it. The law should no longer arouse these things because we are dead to it. As it says, "having died." There is a dispute as to the meaning of "having died." Is it the law that died to us, or we who died to the law? Some manuscripts imply one and some the other. The answer is that the law is in full effect for those who have not come to Christ. Therefore, those who have received Christ have died to it. We have died with Christ and are raised with Him - free from the law.

The law held us captive and we were slaves to it, but when we died with Christ - as Paul has so precisely detailed in the previous chapters - we were released from its bonds "so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

This theme will be reintroduced by Paul on several occasions in his epistles. The "oldness of the letter" is speaking of that which was written down; the law. It was received on tablets of stone and it bound the people of Israel to sin by showing them their utterly sinful nature. Now that we have died to the law through Jesus (because Jesus fulfilled the law, including His death which was in fulfillment of it) we should serve in newness of the Spirit.

In 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, a detail of the difference between the "letter" and the "Spirit" is given. Paul says there that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." As a real, tangible example of this, it was noted in Exodus at the giving of the law that 3000 who disobeyed received the wages of their sin and died (Exodus 32:28). However, at the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost, 3000 received the gift and were saved (Acts 2:41). This wasn't an arbitrary pattern, but one set in the pages of the Bible specifically to show the difference - death from the law, or death to the law and life through the Spirit.

We who have called on Jesus now have the Spirit and we may walk in that new state. There is an eternal hope which cannot be taken away and the evidence is our placement in Christ; free from the bondage of the law, and thus free to serve our new Master.

Life application: We have died to the law, so heed the words of Paul from Colossians 2:20-22 -

"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?"

What the law bound you to is gone. Live for Christ, and do not reintroduce the law to which you have died.