



Romans 7:1-6
“Freed from the Curse”

Romans 7:1 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?

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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.

I know it's silly but whenever I hear the phrase “under a curse” I think of the opening scenes of Sleeping Beauty where the baby Princess Aurora is being presented, and then you remember the evil Queen Maleficent appears and curses Aurora saying that she will *"prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and die before the sun sets on her sixteenth birthday"* How awful, a baby under a terrible curse, but we have the fairy Godmothers who will attempt to save her from the curse.

Well brothers and sisters, if you'll forgive me for making the comparison, you and I were born under a curse as well, and not because of Maleficent but because of our first father Adam, because of his original sin in the Garden, all of his posterity were born under the curse of the law. All of us were born sinners, and as Paul has already told us the wages of sin is death. In our case however there were no fairy Godmothers to save us from the curse of death. As long as we were alive we would be under that curse, and each day we got closer to the penalty. Death, judgment and hell.

You may deny that, you may contend it's not true, but like the prisoner on death row may curse the law, hate it for its strictness, even deny its authority over him, none of those things will actually remove him from death row! And if we could actually have the benefit of being able to review our own lives from start to finish, we'd be forced to concur with the fact that we are sinners guilty of breaking all of the commandments, again and again.

But Paul is writing here to let Christian's know that they have escaped from that fearful end, they have been freed from the curse of the law. How? Well Paul explains using an illustration that everyone would have been familiar with.

He points out the fact that Death changes our relationship to the law

A dead man can no longer be prosecuted or punished

As an illustration of this fact, Paul shows that while her husband is alive, a wife has legal, covenantal obligations. So that if she were to simply marry another she would be considered an adulteress, because the law bound her to her first husband.

But the death of the spouse dissolves the marriage, she is no longer bound by the law of marriage and can legally marry again.

So how did death change the Christian's relationship to the law of God? Well as much as many would like to think it has, it is not the eternal law of God that died to change our situation. As a perfect expression of the holiness of God, it can never die. Rather, it is the believer who died, our more correctly the believer who died with Christ:

We were under the curse of the law, so Christ took our curse upon himself, and died on the cross in our place. Turn with me if you would to *Gal. 3:10: For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."*

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),

14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

And so he was able to write to believers:

Romans 6:8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The believers death with Christ is a death to the law, Salvation by grace, by trusting Christ, means a complete end to trust in the law.

When we were in the flesh, that refers to the believer's old nature, before we were born again, when we were dead in our sins, and still under the curse of the law. In our old nature, far from being able to subdue or transform our sinful passions, the law actually inflamed them. We are so perverse that when the command *not* to do something came in, we immediately began to think about doing it! Mother says *don't eat the cookies, they are for after dinner* and all we can think of from that point onwards is how good the cookies would taste. Maybe she wouldn't notice if just one was missing... A friend mentioned once that he told his daughter not to go beyond the sideline on a basketball court and she

spent the rest of the night going right up to the line, putting a toe over, seeing if she could cross it without him noticing! Rules without generation will never be sufficient to stop sinful behavior, and that is why merely teaching our children *the law of God* will not produce moral children, it will produce kids obsessed with the boundaries like that little girl became obsessed with the line on the court. **Romans 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

The Christian is freed from the curse and freed from the bondage of legalism, he is liberated now to serve God from a new spirit of love and gratefulness. Before he became a believer, his obedience to God's commandments was half-hearted and motivated by fear, he never truly obeyed as a son, but acted like a sullen and rebellious slave always concerned to see what he could "get away with."

Gal. 2:19 "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Application 1: The believer's dying to the law did not open up the way to antinomianism, but an end to legalism. Calvin said this freedom "is not from the righteousness which is taught in the law, but from the rigid demands of the law and from the curse which follows from its demands." Morris adds, "It is not the law that dies, but the believer. The law still points to the kind of living that is pleasing in the sight of God. But the believer is dead to all forms of legalism. He will engage in upright living as the result but not the cause of his salvation"

But though the moral law be thus far abolished, it remains as a perpetual rule to believers. Though it is not their Savior, it is their guide. Though it is not a covenant of life; yet it is normal, a rule of life. Every Christian is bound to conform to it; and to write, as exactly as he can, after this copy. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid." Rom. 3:31. Though a Christian is not under the condemning power of the law, yet he is under its commanding power. To love God, to reverence and obey him, is a law which always binds and will bind in heaven. – Thomas Watson

There are so many who tell us that we don't really need the gospel, it's too exclusive, too supernatural, too humbling because it tells us that our salvation and our righteousness depends entirely upon Christ and not upon our own works. So they say we just need to teach good morals and that will be enough. We just need the law. Well when you do that, it's rather like saying, ok the problem is that out of the unregenerate human heart comes a continuous stream of sin, for as Jesus said in Mark 7:21 **"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."** So what we are going to do is use the law as a makeshift dam to hold back that stream. But those of you who as kids ever tried to build a mud wall dam to stop the water as it flowed down the gutter know that the dam may be able to hold back the waters of sin for a little while, but eventually the pressure becomes overwhelming and the water flows around the dam or breaks simply breaks through it. There's a national and an individual application to that: That's what we tried to do in our nation, we said we don't need the gospel, we just need morals. But eventually that dam broke, and the flood waters of sin that were released were overwhelming. We can also do this with our kids, but when the morality dam breaks in them, the flood is often terrible.

We need not a dam but an end to the stream of sin. We need something that cuts off the spring at the source. We need something that can deal with the heart and only the gospel can do that!

What we need is not to **Matt. 23:25** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

26 "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

What do we need? Inward cleansing, a washing that only Christ can do. Our old husband, the law couldn't do it, but Christ can: That's why he uses marriage as the analogy for his union to the church:

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.