

ROMANS 7
Message 5
Words: 6107

INTRO: We are looking at the believer's release from the law. Paul has illustrated how this takes place in 7:1-3 and it is one of the most amazing illustrations. We'll read these verses:

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.

Verses 1-3 are the illustration, verses 4-6 are the application. No point of law could have proved Paul's application like marriage. So we ask just how does this illustration apply to the Christian's life as related to the law? Well, we find that in verses 4-6 like this:

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.

How did we become dead to the law? It is like a woman who is bound by marriage to a man. This bond lasts as long as both are alive. But if the husband dies, now she is free to remarry and she is not an adulteress. Here is what that illustrates: We were married to the flesh, so to speak, by our consent to the flesh to sin. Because we had sinned, we are now required to die physically and face the consequences. But because Christ took

our place in death, as our substitute, now the body is dead positionally. Positionally we died with Christ and we were raised with Him. And now, since the flesh is positionally dead through Christ, we are free from the law and free to form a bond with Him.

Why does Paul use the law for his illustration? It is because God's justice is involved and justice involves law. If God's law requires that a sinner must die physically to satisfy His justice, then God must remain just. So to remain just, He gave Himself in the sinner's place. That is huge! God gave Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, in the place of the sinner. Now He remains just and the justifier of the one who meets His conditions, and these conditions are repentance and faith.

2. The Applied (4-6)

a. The purpose of release (4)

So we ask now, what is the purpose of all this? Well, we are told in Romans 7:4:

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.

So we'll work our way through this verse. Verse 1 began with the conjunction, "or." It gave logical argument for the fact that the Christian is dead to the law. The law has no more jurisdiction over him. Having shown this, we note first that Paul begins verse 4 with another conjunction, the word, "Therefore." Since the believer has been freed from the law, for this reason, *therefore*. So, what follows comes from the fact that we have died to the law.

Then, as in verse 1, he addresses what he is about to say to, "my brethren." I believe he is referring to the Christians at Rome, and not his brethren the Jews. And again, what follows can only be true of Christians.

Then notice third, the word *also*. He says, "...you also have become dead to the law..." What does he mean by "also"? Well, we have died to the law just like a woman in the illustration has died to the law of marriage when her husband died. The law cannot call her an adulteress now even though she marries another man. She has become dead to that law by the death of her husband.

Fourth, we note that the believer has become dead to the law through the body of Christ. We must be careful to see that it is not the law that has not died, nor the woman. The law is still in effect and the woman is still alive. It is the husband that died. So the law has no more hold over the woman because her husband died.

My physical body was to die. But Christ died in my place. He was my substitute. The substitutionary death of Christ is another very important doctrine. When you receive a substitute it is usually of equal value or higher. When you fly on an airplane, and the economy class is full, and a class one seat is still available you don't mind a substitute. The believer's substitute, which is Jesus Christ, is of significantly greater value than we are. What an outstanding deal we get. One would think everybody would go for it. There are two reasons people don't. First, it requires admission of sin and repentance, which requires confession. Second, it requires living in obedience to the Word of God by faith, and this meets huge resistance from our sin nature. The unbeliever is enslaved to the sin nature, and thus resists these requirements. So, what we note is that the law did not die. It is still in effect.

The greatest sin a believer can ever commit is to reject this substitute and turn back to the old life. Now there are those who say that is not possible. But it is very possible and the Scriptures warn over and over against it. The Hebrews, who were thinking of going back to

Judaism were warned over and over. The writer says in 2:12:

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

A believer can depart from the living God. It is the brethren he is warning. In 6:1-6 they are told that if they fall away after they are saved, it is not possible to renew them again to repentance. Then in 10:23-29 he says this:

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

When one becomes a believer, the law does not die. If one rejects Christ after receiving Christ, the law will now hold him without hope

of further reconciliation. Christ will not die twice for such a person.

The fifth thing we noted in verse 4 is that it is the believer who has become dead to the law. The believer has died to the law just like the woman in Paul's illustration whose husband has died has been freed from the law that bound her to him in marriage.

So here is what we have looked at in verse 4 this far:

4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ,

Sixth, we note now in verse 6 that we have become dead to the law in order, and I quote:

that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead,

There we have a twofold purpose as to why we died to the law. The first is so that we might be married to another, which is Christ. Instead of being married to the flesh to obey it in its lusts, we may now marry Christ in order to obey Him. So, Paul says that just like this woman has become dead to that law because her husband died, so believers have become dead to the law because they have died in Christ, their substitute. When a person dies, the law has no more hold over him. However, in a marriage relationship, when the husband dies, the wife is still alive. She can now make a new life. The law that bound her in marriage releases its hold when the husband dies. The law now has no more hold on her.

You see, in the illustration of our marriage relationship to the flesh, we had a bad marriage partner. By marriage to the flesh, we were doomed to death. We married it by consent, the consent of sin. One commentator in the Ecclectic notes on the online bible program gave this account of a certain woman

who had married a bad marriage partner. He writes:

"I meet a woman and see her very depressed. They tell me, 'She will always be like that. She has a husband who can only ask, and never give, and she is tottering to the grave.' I meet her a year or two later, and she is another woman. I say, 'What has come over you?' 'Oh, my husband died, and I found another (who) wanted me.'"

The unsaved person has a partner that can only ask and never give. This partner is the flesh. And the lost person married to the flesh is tottering to the grave. Then this person meets Christ and repents and puts his or her trust in Him and the old man, or the marriage partner dies, and a new marriage is formed. This new partner gives. This new marriage partner first gives life and then victory in life.

Before a person is saved he is under obligation to the law. If he fails in any point the law says, "You must die." The flesh, the marriage partner, will see to it that we fail. So Galatians 3:10 says, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Since we have all failed in some point, we are all cursed. But now that Christ was cursed in our place, and it was His body for ours, now we have died in Him to that law. And now, by the death of the flesh, we are free to marry again.

Paul's illustration, using the law of marriage is the only law that so perfectly pictures this great truth of the believer's union with Christ. The believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection is a great doctrine. Look at Romans 6:3-5. Paul says:

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

We were baptized into His death. There is union with Christ. We were buried with Him. There is union in burial. We were raised with Him in His resurrection. There is union in resurrection to new life. Marriage is a union. Here is what happens when a sinner repents and puts his or her faith in Jesus Christ. The old man dies, freeing the person from the law. The new man is married to Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. There is union, pictured by Paul as the believer's marriage to Christ.

We note now the seventh and the last point in this verse. All of what preceded has this has one major purpose. What is it? Our first marriage brought about sin and more sin. Our second marriage is to bring forth fruit to God. There should be a continual growth in righteousness.

We'll read the entire verse:

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,

And it is now that he gives the final purpose, and the reason why God sent His only Son to die on our behalf and save us. It is,

that we should bear fruit to God.

So, what we have last here is the major purpose of our union with Christ in His death

burial and resurrection: *...that we should bear fruit to God.* Here we have the major purpose of all of salvation. What fruit can the unsaved bring to God? None! It is not that they cannot do good things from man's perspective. But all man's righteousness is like filthy rags (Is. 64:6). The unsaved can do nothing that brings fruit to God.

Now let us put some arguments to rest. Look at Romans 5:20-21:

20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

We might be tempted to think that since where sin abounded, grace abounded much more; therefore, we might bring more glory to God if we sinned more. So, Paul immediately continues like this in 6:1:

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

The immediate answer is, "God forbid." Or we might say, "Don't even think it!" Here is the question: If where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, would it not only make sense to sin more in order that grace might abound even more? God forbid!

Why did God send His Son to die in our place? When the angel told Joseph what to name the Son who would be born to his wife, Mary, He said Joseph should call His name Jesus, which means Jehovah saves. Why this name? The angel answered like this, "Because He will save His people FROM their sins."

And so, Paul now says that we have been set free from the law so that we might become united to Christ, in order that we might bring

forth fruit to God. Certainly, sin is not a fruit for God, but righteousness is.

Now look at 6:15:

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Should we continue in sin because we are not under law but under grace? Perish even such a thought! So we go on in verse 16:

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

When we were married to the flesh, we were slaves to the flesh. So, we obeyed the flesh and we were tottering to death. But we obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which we were delivered. That is that Christ died in our place so that we might have life through Him. And now that we have been set free from sin, that is all our past sins, we have become slaves to righteousness. How then can we continue in sin if we are slaves to righteousness? We can't!

Now let me ask, from our studies in our catechism, what is the chief end of man? Why did God create man? He created man to bring glory to Him! And that is what the saved man does who brings fruit to God.

Consider now the words of Jesus in John 15. These words are given just before He went to the cross. We'll read verses 1-8:

1 *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

2 *"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

3 *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

4 *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

5 *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

6 *"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*

7 *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

8 *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

In verse 8 we see that bearing fruit and glorifying God go hand in hand. So why have we been set free from the law? It is that we might bear fruit to God. That brings us now to verse 5.

b. The need for release (5)

So in verse 4 we have the purpose why we were released from the law. In verse 5 we now have the need for release. Paul now says:

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.

When Paul says, "For when we were in the flesh..." what is he talking about? In his illustration it is when we were married to the flesh. All those who are unsaved are in the flesh, so when we were still unsaved, we were in the flesh.

Before we are saved the law aroused our sinful passions. So let us consider these sinful passions first. What are they? I would identify this with what we call the sin nature. Now the Scriptures do not ever use the phrase, sin nature, or old nature, or new nature. But the fact that man has a sin nature is abundantly clear in life, and it is taught in other words in Scripture.

For example, Ephesians 2:1-3 says this:

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

The spirit that works in the unsaved is the devil, and we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. We were by nature the children of wrath. That is what is meant by the sin nature. The old man, is self under the control of the flesh. So Paul illustrated that as being married to the flesh. The flesh is that in which the sin nature resides. The new man is self, married

to Christ. 1 Peter 1:3 calls the new nature, the divine nature. He says we have become partakers of this divine nature. So the sinful passions speaks of our old nature, or self under dominion of the flesh.

Paul then says that when we were unsaved our sinful passions were aroused by the law. The KJV translates this as the *motions of sins* being aroused by the law. The NKJV more accurately translates this as *passions of sins*. The original word is *patheema*. The key idea of this word is "to suffer." But it also has the idea of passions or impulses. Now passions or impulses can be good or bad. But the passions or impulses described here are the sinful passions or impulses of the flesh. These impulses originate in the sin nature.

Now it is an interesting thing that the sin nature is aroused to resist laws. The sin nature does not like standards. For example, when one is used to living in a certain way, and a law is put in place that now no longer allows one to live in that way, the immediate response is an impulse to resist that law. I worked in the forest for many years, whether it was in a little sawmill or cutting down trees. And during those years many new safety laws came into effect. There were laws about wearing a hardhat, or certain boots, or certain pants for power saw users and many other laws. And when these laws infringed on what we were used to, as most of these did, we immediately resisted. Looking back, I wonder how we stayed alive. Compliance was hard to get from us. We fought almost every new law. Now I understand that today, in safety rules, there are truly extremes, but most of what we saw as extremes back then was simply logical.

That is how it is in the moral realm as well. When the Gospel goes out to people who are used to living in sinful cultures, the moral laws of Christianity cut directly across many things in all cultures. Only when we are truly

born again do we begin to see how valuable the moral laws of the Bible are.

Now these sinful impulses, pushed by our sinful nature, which resides in the flesh, cause us to sin and thus bring forth fruit to death. James puts it like this in James 1:13:

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

A temptation is when something comes before one that one desires or longs for, but it is forbidden. God cannot desire something that is not good or right, nor will he ever tempt us with something that is not right. So what causes us to want something that is not right for us? It is our sin nature, of which Satan and demons make much use. Now desires, like various impulses, may be good or bad. When the desire is for that which is wrong, it is bad. James gives a seven step progress of sin. There is first a desire. Then there is enticement. What is that? The picture the words James used are that of a trap with bait on it. To be enticed is to be baited.

Then one is drawn away by a desire for the bait. Then when one reaches out to take the bait, then comes the snap, and one is caught. As soon as one is caught, sin is conceived. When desire and the bait come together in intimate embrace conception takes place and conception then gives birth to sin. The sin grows and brings about death.

So Paul says in Romans 7:5:

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.

The fruit of the sinful passions is sin, and the wages of sin is death. Before we are saved the sinful passions, which were aroused by the law are at work in our members and ultimately bear fruit to death. All that took place when we were in the flesh. The result was fruit which leads to death. So God set us free from the law that we might be resurrected in Christ to bring forth fruit to God.

So listen to 1 Peter 3:18:

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

Christ was put to death in the flesh. It was His flesh in the place of our flesh. So my position in Christ is that I have died with Him, I was buried with Him, and I rose again with Him to newness of life. Christ took our place in the body. He was our substitute. Our bodies are now positionally dead. Here we remember the standing and state of the believer, and the illustration of George Wyatt. Richard Pratt died in his place, and the law of the United States could not legally require him to enter military service. He was positionally dead, but physically alive. We too are positionally dead in Christ, but we too are still alive and can still make things right.

Before man is saved he has nothing to overcome those sinful passions. The law could show us what to do and what not to do, but it could not take care of our past sins and had nothing to help us overcome these sinful passions in the present. As a matter of fact, if anything, the law aroused them to further disobedience. Somehow, there is something in a law or rule that arouses us to further disobedience.

So John Bunyan wrote:

To run and work **the law commands,**
But gives us neither feet nor hands.
But better news the gospel **brings,**
It bids us fly and **gives** us wings.

So here is how things stand with the lost. All have sinned and therefore all are condemned by the law. The other day I was reading in Acts 13. Turn to that chapter. The church at Antioch was the first Christian church outside of Israel. The Lord was reaching out to the Gentiles with the Gospel. At Antioch, Paul and Barnabus were sent out as the first missionaries.

They always went first to the synagogues, since they were Jews and the Jews met in synagogues. So turn to Acts 13 and we'll read the account of how Paul shared the Gospel in a Jewish synagogue in another city called Antioch. We will begin in verse 14:

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

17 "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it.

18 "Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.

19 "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.

20 "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 "And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

22 "And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

23 "From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—

24 "after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 "And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

26 "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

27 "For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him.

28 "And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.

29 "Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.

30 "But God raised Him from the dead.

31 "He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.

32 "And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers.

33 "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'

34 "And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'

35 "Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'

36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;

37 "but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

39 "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

41 *"Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish!
For I work a work in your days, A work which
you will by no means believe, Though one were
to declare it to you."*

After the usual reading of the law, Paul and Barnabas were invited to share with these Jews. What is clear is that these Jews tried to be justified by keeping the law. But no one can be saved by keeping the law because once one has sinned one is condemned. So Bunyan says:

To run and work **the law commands,**
But gives us neither feet nor hands.
But better news the gospel **brings,**
It bids us fly and **gives** us wings.

So Paul preaches Jesus to them and says in verse 38 that in Christ there is forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness deals with a person's past sins. So note verse 39:

39 *"and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

The sinner who truly believes is justified from all his past sins, from which the law of Moses could not justify. It could only say, "Guilty. Guilty."

Now, before we were saved we were in the flesh. In Paul's illustration, we were married to the flesh. The sinful passions, the sin nature was aroused by the law. These passions work in our members, that is the various parts of the body. When Christ died, it was His body that died. When Christ died, His body died in the place of our body.

So look at Romans 8:3:

3 *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,*

on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

The law could not help us to quit sinning. It could do nothing with the flesh except condemn it to death. But God, by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin, condemned sin in the flesh. How did He condemn sin in the flesh? How? He said we should sin no more. It is wrong. Don't do it. He condemned it. Why did He die physically and condemn sin in the flesh. Romans 8:4:

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Why did Christ die in the flesh; His flesh for our flesh? Why did He die in our place and leave us alive? So that we might be enabled to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. That we might no longer walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

So look at the end of verse 4. It says, "that we might bear fruit to God." Here is the purpose of it all. Now look at the end of verse 5. When we were in the flesh, it caused us to bear fruit to death. Such is the great difference between the saved and the unsaved.

CONCL: So to conclude, here is the plight of all of mankind. The law says, "If you fail me in one point, you are a sinner and you are condemned and you must die." Since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, therefore all are under the condemnation of the law. The person who dies under the condemnation of the law will go to hell. But God loved the world and, being a righteous God, He would do all He could to save man. So He sent the second Person of the Triune God into the world by having Him become one of mankind.

So listen to Galatians 4:4-5:

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

He was born under the law. What does that mean? I understand that to mean that like all others, to continue to be at unity with God, they must keep the whole law. Unlike all others, He was able to keep the whole law and never fell out of fellowship with God. And because He never failed God in one point, He was now fit to be the Redeemer of those who were condemned under the law because they had sinned. And all of this was so that we, all of us, might receive the adoption as sons that is to ultimately and finally be with God in glory.

But to be with God in glory after we die, we must be redeemed from the condemnation of the law. And to show how the believer is freed from the law in Romans 7, Paul uses the illustration of a woman whose husband has died and she remains alive and is free to remarry.

And the whole purpose of it all is that we might bring forth fruit to God. Through all this, the believer is enabled to live the life God desires.