

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE LAW

ROMANS 7:1-13

Text:

Introduction:

Throughout chapter seven, the Law of God is a constant theme. The word “law” appears over twenty times in this one chapter. In most of those instances, Paul is referring to the moral law of God, specifically the Ten Commandments. It is the question of the believer’s relationship to those commandments that Paul strives to answer in this section.

“Just where do we stand as one justified by faith in respect to the Law? What should be our attitude toward the Law? Does the Law perform any meaningful service now? These questions will be answered in the chapter before us.”

While Paul establishes that the believer is no longer bound to the Law, he in no way paints the Law of God as being useless to the Christian. Paul is adamant that the Law of God is not the means of justification, or sanctification. And at the same time, the Law is still inspired, infallible, and important.

“Paul is not, as we shall discover, saying that the law has no place at all in the Christian life, but that it has no power to enable the Christian to live the Christian life.”

As Paul addresses the question of the Christian and the Law, there are three truths that arise.

1. OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW IS ENDED (VS. 1-4)

Romans 7:1-4

¹ Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? ² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. ³ So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. ⁴ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

A. The Picture Paul Employs

Beginning in verse two, Paul uses the institution of marriage to help clarify our relationship to the Law. He says that if a woman has a husband, she is, “...bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth...”

Paul goes on to explain that only in the case of death, is the woman free to marry someone else. In verse three Paul says, "...if her husband be dead, she is free from that law..." Her relationship to her husband in marriage is a binding law upon her life that prohibits her from having another spouse.

As Paul stated in verse one, every man born into this world is born with a life bound to the Law of God. Chapter one spoke of how God reveals His Law to all men, and they are bound to it, as strongly as the bond of matrimony.

The only way this bond is broken is by death. That leads us to the truth Paul is trying to teach with this picture of marriage.

B. The Principle Paul Establishes

When we come to verse four, the illustration seems to be reversed, and yet Paul's point is still clear. A death has legally ended our relationship to the Law. Paul says, "...ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ..."

The Law demanded our death, and Christ, the lover of our soul, and our prospective Bridegroom, died for us to satisfy the demands of the Law, and then rose again so that we could be wed to Him in new life!

Paul is not confused when he turns the illustration around! He is pointing us to the work of the Lord Jesus, and showing us how that in Him and because of Him, we are no longer bound to the Law.

As Paul continues talking about our terminated relationship to the Law, we see also:

C. The Purpose Paul Explains

The last phrase of verse four is critical to understanding this section. Paul states that we have died to the Law, and are wed now instead to Christ, for the purpose, "...that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Under the Law we are guilty, separated, and doomed. Our lives cannot glorify God, even when we are endeavoring to keep the Law. No fruit can ever come from a life bound to the Law.

Legalism produces frustration; not fruit. The reason our relationship to the Law has ended is so that we can produce spiritual fruit!

When it comes to the Christian and the Law, Paul teaches us that our relationship to the Law has ended, and then he continues by pointing out that:

2. OUR RELEASE FROM THE LAW IS ESSENTIAL (VS. 5-6)

Romans 7:5-6

⁵For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. ⁶But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

As Paul moves into verse five, we find that there was a kind of fruit from our union to the Law, and that is precisely the reason the union had to be severed.

In verses five and six, Paul contrasts the results of our life under the Law, and the results of our life united with Christ.

In looking at these two verses, we see why it is so important that our relationship to the Law be ended, and we be released and united with Christ.

A. To Change the Operation of Our Life

In verse five, Paul reminds us that, "...when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the Law, did work in our members..."

The word "motions" in verse five, literally means "passions".

When you understand that Paul was talking about the passions and emotions of sins, you can grasp why these things would need to be changed.

Paul says these passions “did work” in our bodies. The word “work” means “energy”. Under the Law our bodies were energized by the passions of sin.

B. To Change the Outcome of Our Life

Paul goes on in verse five to remind us that these passions of sins that were operating in our body produced, “...fruit unto death.” We are reminded of Paul’s earlier words in chapter three. “...the wages of sin is death...”

Under the Law, our bodies were given to sinful passions, and the outcome is death. Our relationship to the Law has to end in order for this outcome to change.

C. To Change the Obedience of Our Life

In verse six, Paul makes the contrast between our life under the Law, and our life once it is unified to Christ. He says, “But now we are delivered from the Law...that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Much of what Paul is going to say in the next chapter is related to this statement at the close of verse six.

There he will deal with walking in Spirit's enablement. His point now is to show that we are dead to the Law, not so that we can be lawless, but so that we can be truly obedient.

“...no longer the old principle of the dread and unrelieved ‘Thou Shalt,’ cut with a pen of legal iron upon the stones of Sinai; bearing no provision of enabling power, but all possible provision of doom for the disloyal. It is to be ‘in the Spirit’s newness’; on the new, wonderful principle...of the Holy Ghost’s empowering presence.”

-H.C.G. Moule

While we could not obey the letter of the Law, we can obey the Spirit that penned the Law!

Paul says that for the Christian, our relationship to the Law is ended, and our release from the Law is essential, and then he goes on to qualify all of this by pointing out that:

3. OUR RESPECT FOR THE LAW IS ETERNAL (VS. 7-13)

Romans 7:7-13

⁷ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. ⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death. ¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*. ¹² Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. ¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

As believer's, our marriage to Christ has brought a new appreciation and respect for the Law. Paul explains this eternal respect. We respect the Law because:

A. It Shows Us the Reality of Sin (7)

The Law is not sin, it only revealed the presence of sin. He says, "...I had not known sin, but by the law..."

B. It Shows Us the Result of Sin (11)

C. It Shows us the Repulsiveness of Sin (13)

Paul respected the Law, because the Law became the mirror through which he saw sin as a reality in his life. The commandment is what caused Paul to despise sin for its repulsiveness.

Close:

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