

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 17

I. Exposition of Chapter Seven.

A. Dead to the Law.

1. Verses 1-3 - The Law has authority only over the Living.

a. Paul now explains more completely how it is that we are no longer under the dominion of the law. In chapter six we discovered:

1) Death no longer has dominion over Christ and therefore over us because we were **“crucified with Him.” - 6:5-9.**

2) Sin shall not have dominion over us – **6:14.**

b. We could also say:

1) **Romans 6** – The believer is **“dead to sin.”**

2) **Romans 7** – The believer is **“dead to the law.”**

c. **Verse 1** – **“...that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?”** - The Greek wording here has no **“the”** before **“law”**. Most expositors seem to agree that Paul is speaking here of a principle broader than the Mosaic Law. The law that has dominion over us includes the Law of Moses, but there is a broader principle of law communicated by creation and conscience, and these also have dominion over a man. Kenneth Wuest agrees with this as can be seen in his translation:

“Or, are you ignorant, brethren, for I am speaking to those who have an experiential knowledge of law, that the law exercises lordship over the individual as long as he lives?”¹

d. **Verses 2-3** – An illustration: Paul makes the point that death ends all obligations and contracts.

A wife is no longer bound to her husband if he dies because death ends that contract. **If her husband dies, she is free from that law.**

“As a woman whose husband has died is free to marry another, so also are believers, since they have died to the law, free to belong to Christ.” – Robert Mounce, *Romans*

2. **Verse 4** – **“...you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ...”** - This is not referring to the concept of the church as the body of Christ (cf. **I Corinthians 12:12, 27**), but to Christ’s physical body as in **6:3–11** where, when Christ died, believers, by way of identification, died with Him. His death was their death (cf. **II Corinthians 5:14–15; Galatians 2:20**). His resurrected life freed them to serve God and others.

a. **“...that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”**

1) **“...married to another”** is often translated as **“joined to another.”** The result of being joined to Christ is that now we are to **“bear fruit to God.”**

“The whole purpose of marriage is offspring. The figure of marriage is continued as this verse refers to ‘fruit unto God.’ The spiritual fruit of such union should be fruit unto holiness. (Note “fruit” in Romans 6:21-22; 7:4-5)

‘...be fruitful, and multiply...’ (Genesis 1:26-29). There is fruit unto shame and death (unto death; union with sin and the old husband), and, likewise, there is fruit unto holiness and everlasting life (union with Christ, the new husband) (Galatians 5:22-23; John 15:1-15).” – Kevin J. Conner

3. Verse 5 - The problem with the Law.

a. **“For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions...”** – Kenneth Wuest helps with an understanding of this when he writes:

The expression “in the flesh” refers to the condition of a person in the absolute control of the evil nature, as is clearly seen by a consideration of Paul’s words in 8:9, where he says, “But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God, dwell in you.” That is, in the case where the person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that person is not in the control of the evil nature. That individual is a saved person. Consequently, the one who is in the flesh is an unsaved person, the flesh here referring to the fallen nature.²

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 114.

²*Ibid.*, 115.

- b. **“...the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members...”** – So, when we were unbelievers, controlled by the evil nature (fallen nature), we had **“sinful passions”** which were **“aroused by the law.”**
- 1) **“sinful passions”** (**“motions of sins”** – KJV) mean; **“movement, sin in actions, motions, emotions or impulses of sin.”**
 - 2) **“aroused by the law”** – The word **“aroused”**, although not found in the Greek text does seem to accurately convey the idea intended. This shows how great the evil of sin is - it can take something good and holy like the law and twist it to promote evil. Sin warps love into lust, an honest desire to provide into greed, and law into a promoter of sin.
 - 3) Under the law, we did not bear fruit to God. Instead we bore **“fruit to death”**, because the law aroused the passions of sins within us.

4. Verse 6 - Delivered from the Law.

- a. **“But now we have been delivered from the law...”** - The theme of **verses 1-5** is summarized. As we have seen several times, the law does not *justify* us; it does not make us right with God. The law does not *sanctify* us; it does not take us deeper with God and make us more holy before Him.
- b. **“...so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”** Our freedom is given not so we can stop serving God; but so that we can serve Him better, by the power of the Holy Spirit within us not by some kind of legalistic obligation.

“How well do you *serve* in the newness of the Spirit? It is a shame that many serve sin or legalism with more devotion than those who should serve God out of the newness of the Spirit. It’s too bad when fear motivates us more than love.” – David Nuzik’s *Enduring Word Commentary*

B. Our problem with God’s perfect Law.

“Romans 7:7–25 expresses a human reality. All human beings, both saved and lost, have experienced the tension of good and evil in their world and in their own hearts and minds.”³

Note: Scholars debate whether the following verses are talking about the unbeliever or the believer. In my thinking, the simplest approach is to see that it applies to human beings in general. All people, saint and sinner have a struggle with sin. The believer, however, has a great advantage because he has supernatural power over sin!

1. Verse 7 - Paul asks: **“What shall we say then? Is the law sin?”**

- a. Paul insisted that we must die to the law if we’re going to bear fruit to God. Someone could think, **“Surely there is something wrong with the law!”**
- b. **“Certainly not! On the contrary.”**
 - 1) **“For I would not have known sin except through the law...”** -The law is like an x-ray machine; it reveals plainly what might have always been there, but was hidden before. You can’t blame an x-ray for what it exposes.
 - 2) **“For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’”** We might never know that we are sinning in many areas (such as covetousness) if the law did not spell this out to us specifically. The word **“covet”** means; **“to lust”**; **“to have an inordinate desire or a desire for something that isn’t lawful.”**

2. Verse 8 - Sin corrupts the commandment (law).

- a. **“But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.”**
 - 1) The word **“opportunity”** means; **“a rushing on, onset, impetus, violent tendency. An occasion, an opportunity or casual circumstance producing a tendency something else”** *Word Study Dictionary*. Vincent Word Studies adds; **“a place to start, a base of operations.”**
 - 2) Paul describes the dynamic where the warning **“don’t do that”** may become a call to action because of our sinful, rebellious hearts. It isn’t the fault of the commandment, but it is our fault.

³Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 7:7–25.