

Ministry of Grace Church

Romans 7:1-6 - Sermon Notes



Background

In the previous chapter, Paul told us that sin should not be master over us because we are not under the Law but under Grace ([Romans 6:14](#)). He said that when we got saved, we died to sin and we now live to God as our new master. So, if we have been set free from the Law, why does it still have a negative impact on us? In this seventh chapter of Romans, Paul will tell us why we are still affected by the Law even though we are not under obligation to it any longer.

The metaphor that he used in the previous chapter was that of the master-slave relationship. In actuality, it is more than a metaphor because God is the Master of all creation, and all things are in subjection to Him. In this chapter he uses a different metaphor, the marriage relationship. And once again, it is more than a metaphor, because the church (made up of those of us who are saved through faith in the blood of Christ) is portrayed as the Bride of Christ. This is a significant distinction regarding Christians both now and eternally.

All believers will be with God in heaven, but not all believers will be the same in heaven. What do I mean? Consider this: in the spirit realm of angels today, there are different types of spirit beings. Among the angels, there are differing types and purposes. For instance, there are cherubim and seraphim who have specific responsibilities around the throne of God. There are Archangels, rulers and authorities, called principalities and powers in some translations. (see [Ephesians 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16, colossians 2:15](#)) There are also “presence angels” like Gabriel, who stand in the presence of the Almighty (see [Luke 1:18-19](#)). There are also four unique creatures full of eyes in front and behind, who are around the throne of God ([Revelation 4:6-8](#)).

So, also will there be differences of position and function for human believers who graduate from this life to the next. There were believers who lived before the Law, such as Job and Abraham as well as those who came to faith during the period of the Law. We who believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are called Christians. And there will also be those who come to faith during the tribulation and also during the Millennium. These appear to be distinct groups of believers who will all be in heaven.

Now, consider this. Throughout the Scriptures, there is only one group of believers who are promised crowns, Christians. These crowns are promised in the following passages: [James 1:12](#); [Revelation 2:10](#); [1 Corinthians 9:25](#); [2 Timothy 4:8](#); and [1 Peter 5:4](#)) In each of these verses, the Greek word translated “crown” is *stephanos*, which is not a ruler’s crown, but a victor’s crown, given to those who overcome during the church age. This is one of the reasons why I believe that the twenty-four elders who sit on thrones around the throne of God ([Revelation 4:4](#)) represent the church (those of us who are saved during the church age). The other unique thing about Christians is that we are the only ones who are referred to as the Bride of Christ (see [2 Corinthians 11:2](#) and [Ephesians 5:24-27](#)). This is significant given the verses we are going over today. Paul will now get into some of the specifics in the Law that apply to this marriage bond.

Romans 7:1

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is master over a person as long as he lives?

He starts out his discussion with another rhetorical question. He says that he is speaking to those who know the Law. This certainly would apply to any Roman Christian who had been converted from the Jewish religion. All Jews know the Law. So, when he asks, “do you not know, brothers ... that the law is master over a person as long as he lives?” the answer is clearly, “Yes, we know!” He will talk more about the marriage relationship in the next few verses.

When we got saved, we moved from a master-slave relationship with God to a marriage. This is a picture of the intimate relationship that God wants to have with each one of us. One of my favorite proofs of this comes from the book of Proverbs. In [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) we are told:

Trust in Yahweh with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

So what does that have to do with the marriage relationship? The word translated “acknowledge” is the Hebrew word *yawdah*, which means “to know someone relationally and intimately.” It is the same word translated as “knew” in [Genesis 4:1](#):

Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain,

Therefore, we could translate [Proverbs 3:6](#) as, “In all your ways become intimately familiar with Him, and He will make your paths straight.” That’s what God wants from each and every one of us. He wants an intimately personal, loving relationship with us! So, let me say this again to you who are brothers and sisters in Christ, God wants an intimately personal, loving relationship with you!

Romans 7:2-3

For the married woman has been bound by law to her husband while he is living, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her

husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

In the previous verse Paul said that the Law is master over a man as long as he lives. The implication is that he is freed from the law when he dies. He now carries that implication to the marriage relationship. Just as the man was under the dominion of the Law while he was alive, his wife was bound by law to her husband as long as he was alive. But when he died, the dominion of the law ceased for him as well as for his wife. She was set free from the wedding bond and was free to marry another.

In the same way, as long as we were alive to sin, we were bound by law to obey sin. But now that we have died to sin (when we were saved) we are no longer bound by that law, and we are free to be married to another, namely Christ.

You see, the early Christians, particularly those who were raised in the Jewish religion, did not yet understand that they were no longer obliged to obey the Law. They were trapped in a system that was trying to impose the restrictions of the Law on every believer. The point that Paul will get to in the next chapter is:

**For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.
(Romans 8:2)**

When we got saved, we died to sin and to the requirements of the Law. We no longer have to fulfill the Law in order to obtain righteousness because God has imputed that righteousness to us as a free gift. Does that mean that we can live a lawless life because we are no longer under the dominion of sin? Paul would say, “No way!” What he will show us in this and the next chapter, is that we are actually under a higher law, a law of voluntary obedience to our new master and husband, Jesus Christ. We can choose to obey or not to obey.

God does not approve of divorce any more than He approves of stealing or coveting. He never intended for divorce to happen because marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church. He has told us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. In other words, He will never divorce us. However, let me ease the mind of those of you who are divorced. God does forgive the sin of divorce just as He forgives any other sin. Divorce does not make you any less a Christian than a brother or sister who has committed any other sin, “**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” (Romans 3:23)

Now, having said that, let me repeat that God does not approve of divorce. So, the metaphor that the Apostle Paul is using here is a picture of how God feels about the relationship between a man and a woman and about the relationship between Christ and the church. Paul says that if a woman is divorced from her husband and remarries, she is committing adultery. We need to take notice, however, that Paul is not teaching about divorce in this passage. He is teaching about being bound by the law just as a woman is bound to her husband until one of them dies.

Back in **Romans 6:6-7** Paul introduced the idea that before we were saved, we were under bondage to our sin nature (our old man). And he told us that our sin nature was crucified with Christ when we were saved. He now uses the metaphor of marriage to show that when our sin nature was crucified, we became free to join ourselves to another, that is, to Christ.

That’s what Paul is referencing when he says, if a woman’s husband dies, she is no longer bound by the marriage obligation and she is free to remarry. Death breaks the legal bond in a marriage

and death breaks the bond that the Law had on us. Therefore, since we died to sin and the Law when we were saved, we are no longer under any obligation to obey the Law.

Romans 7:4-6

So, my brothers, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were constrained, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

There are some who believe Paul is saying that the husband in this imagery is really the Law which is now dead. Because the Law is dead, we as Christians are free to marry another, which is Christ. That would parallel the previous verse and would demonstrate that we are no longer under obligation to the Law since it is now dead. But that is **not** what Paul is saying.

In the current verse Paul says we have become dead to the Law, not that the Law has become dead. His reason for using this imagery is to show that death causes a cessation of the bonds of law. If you re-read the first 11 verses of the previous chapter, you will see that it is our death to sin that Paul is talking about.

Romans 6:1-11 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died has been justified from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

When we were saved, we were made dead to sin, being released from its bondage. That bondage came from the Law to which all belonged (i.e. married to it). Now that we have been made dead to sin, we are no longer bound to try to obtain righteousness through the Law. Instead, as Paul has already said, we have received the gift of righteousness, not because we earned it but because it has been given to us by God.

Getting back to Romans chapter seven now, what does the Apostle Paul mean by the opening part of the next verse, “**For when we were in the flesh**”? Aren’t we always in our flesh, at least until we die? Yes, but that’s not the kind of flesh Paul is talking about. In order to understand what he’s talking about we need to look at a verse in the next chapter of this letter where Paul says,

and those who are in the flesh are not able to please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. ... (**Romans 8:8-9**)

In these verses Paul is contrasting being “in the flesh” and “in the Spirit.” What he means is being controlled by the flesh, the sin nature, versus being controlled by the Spirit of God. Paul has already told us that before we were saved, we were in bondage to sin (controlled by our sin nature.) Now, in the current verse he is telling us that when we were controlled by our sin nature the passions, or overwhelming desires, of sin were not subdued by the Law but energized by it to bring forth fruit that resulted in death. I think Paul is talking about spiritual death or separation from fellowship with God, not physical death. And in the previous verse Paul told us that we should be bringing forth fruit to God by being married to Christ.

So, when we are controlled by our sin nature, we produce fruit that results in spiritual death, but now that we have been saved and freed from the Law, we have become the bride of Christ, and the fruit that we produce should be fruit that is worthy of being brought to God.

In the previous two chapters Paul spent considerable time and energy pointing out two things. The first is, before we were saved, we were slaves to sin because of the Law. The second is, when we were saved, our sin nature was put to death. That is, we died with Christ. And, as he has just shown in the past few verses, death releases us from the requirements of the Law.

Since we are dead with respect to the Law, like the wife who is free to marry after her husband has died, we are no longer under the dictates of the Law and are free to serve God. We are no longer held down by the Law. We are free from it! Let me say that again. Christians are free from the Law!

We don’t have to keep the Ten Commandments or any other part of the Law in order to be righteous in God’s eyes. In fact, you will remember that Paul told us that we couldn’t obtain righteousness by keeping the Law anyway, because no one (except Christ) is able to keep all the Law.

Now we come to a key statement that I don’t want any of us to miss. We have been released from the law to “... [serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.](#)” In other words, before we were saved by grace, we were unable to keep the Law and, therefore, could not serve God because the letter of the Law made us sinful and abhorrent to God. But ... now that we have been set free from the Law, we can serve God in a way that we never could have before - in the spirit of righteousness. That is, since we are now righteous in God’s eyes, He will allow us to serve Him. We have spiritual life which we owe entirely to God. Therefore, we should gladly serve Him with the life that He has given us.

So What?

Let’s talk about fruit. We are no longer under the Law. We don’t have to obey all the rules to be acceptable to God. We are acceptable to God because of the blood of Christ. Therefore, our works (our spiritual fruit) are not the source of our righteousness but the result of it.

When we were saved, we were set free from the penalty of our sins. We were also set free from the requirements of the Law and have become free to serve God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Are you serving God right now? If you are, are you doing so out of obligation or are you serving Him out of gratitude for what He has done for you? We should rejoice in our opportunity to serve Him, because we have been set free from our bondage to the Law!

Earlier, I quoted from Proverbs,

[Trust in Yahweh with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. \(Proverbs 3:5-6\)](#)

Some translations say "... And He will direct your paths." Do you want God to oversee your path in life? Do you want His guidance and direction? If so, then you need to have an intimate personal relationship with Him? That requires a lot of effort on your part. Becoming a Christian is relatively easy, you simply have to believe in the Gospel message. However, being a Christian (producing spiritual fruit) takes a lot of effort. Just like a good marriage, being a Christian requires constant effort to build a solid back-and-forth relationship with God. You can't just sit back and "let it happen."

Here's a question that may appear to come out of left field. What's the difference between a sinner and a saint? According to Paul in this book of Romans, the sinner has no choice, and he does not have a free will; he is not able to obey God, he can only obey his or her sin nature. There are some Christians who get hung-up on free will, refusing to believe that God chose us, as Paul teaches in **Ephesians 1:3-4**. They believe that everyone has a free will to believe God or not, to get saved or not. Well, according to Paul in the book of Romans, in reality, unsaved sinners don't have a free will because they are slaves to their sin nature. Saints, however, that is, born-again Christians, do have a free will and that is the free will to obey God or not obey Him.

So why should I intentionally submit my will to Him? If I have free will, I can do whatever I want. I'm still going to heaven whether I submit to His will or not, right? Remember, this earthly life is not our real life. Think of it as the audition for our real life. The quality of our eternal life will be dependent on how well we do in the audition. Consider these passages in the New Testament:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; (**Matthew 6:19-20**)

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (**2 Corinthians 5:9-10**)

How do we store up treasures in heaven? We do so by being pleasing to Him and serving Him in the here and now, so that when we get to our real life, we can receive those treasures that are being stored up for us.

Now, the question is, what kind of fruit are you bringing to God? Are you allowing the desires of your flesh to control your actions? Or are you so tuned-in to God and walking so close to Him that your fleshly desires are easily resisted? The type of fruit that you produce will answer these questions for you. And – the type of fruit you produce will determine whether or not it turns into treasure in heaven.

So – as a Christian, you can either live this life for yourself, or you can live it for God. The choice is yours! Which one do you choose?

Let's pray.