

Free From the Law – Our Happy Condition *Lasting Freedom from the Captivity of Sin*

Romans Series
PBC 2026

Text: Romans 7:1-6

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

² *For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.*

⁴ *Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.*

⁶ *But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*

Introduction

Romans 6-8 – “Breaking the Power of Cancelled Sin”

- Here is where we are in the flow of 6:1 – 7:6 which is the textual unit:

*6:4 – We have been raised with Christ **in order that we might walk in newness of life** (καινότητι ζωῆς).*

*7:6 – We have been granted freedom **in order that we might serve** (δουλεύειν – *prest act inf*) **in the new way of the Spirit.***

- The flow of the whole section looks like this:

1. We have been rescued from the reign of Sin (6:1-14): ***Sin is portrayed as an evil ruler or king who has been defeated***, and whose power and authority over us have been permanently nullified and brought to nothing. This is why, when we come to Christ, we must make a clean break with our old lives!
2. We have been liberated from the enslavement to sin (6:15-23): ***Sin is depicted as a wicked master*** who paid us the wages of death and enslaved us to more and more bondage the more we served him. This is why, as Christians, we must actively engage and faithfully wage a daily war against the sins that continue to demand a place in our lives.
3. But, now that we have been rescued/removed from the reign of sin and are being liberated from the enslavement to sin, ***we enjoy a radically new relationship to God*** and have received an astonishing new power from Him (7:1-6).
 - We discover something amazing – we didn’t just get a new King who rules over us and a new Lord or Master who has freed us to serve Him and rewards us with the glorious gift of holiness and abundant life – we actually find out that our personal relationship with our new Lord has changed (we went from being slaves to sons — more about this in chapter 8), and our condition is nothing short of astonishing – ***God the Father has actually betrothed us to the crown prince of the realm (the universe)!***
 - But ***for this to happen, one final thing had to happen*** – we had to be released from a righteous authority that had jurisdiction over our lives and had a legitimate warrant for our condemnation and subsequent execution. ***We had to be released from the Law.***
 - And that is the subject of chapter 7. Paul refers to the concept of Law 30x in this chapter (“law” 23x and “commandment/code” 7x)!
 - And the reason this is important is that Paul’s readers had lived their entire lives under a legal system set up by God and codified since the time of Moses, which defined righteousness and promised life for

obedience. Let me give five texts from the Law, Wisdom, and Prophetic sections of the OT that demonstrate this:

- **Leviticus 18:5** *You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*
 - **Deuteronomy 5:32-33** *You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.³³ You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.*
 - **Deuteronomy 30:15-16** *"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.*
 - **Proverbs 7:1-2** *My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you;² keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;*
 - **Ezekiel 20:11** *I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live.*
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- Here is the question that is being asked: *"Paul – you have made it clear and have helped me understand why the Law is of no use in justification – Moses has no power to justify me!"*
 - *"But, now that I am justified and have been declared righteous, won't this Law that defines God's righteous expectations for me be of immense help in my sanctification? Now that I am saved from the condemnation of the Law, don't I need the Law to defeat the sins I am fighting to overcome? In other words, although Moses could not save me, can't he be of immense help in sanctifying me so that I live in ways that please God?"*

Paul gives three important answers to that question:

1. The Law can't help in your sanctification because you are no longer under its jurisdiction. You no longer have a relationship to the Law or its authority – and the strength of law is its authority. And when you did have a relationship to the law before you were saved, its authority was against you – it condemned you. Now that you are saved, it lost that authority over you and thus has no strength to harm you or to help you.

2. When you tried to follow the Law, you realized that such obedience was impossible and that the law couldn't produce in you the kind of obedience that God requires and that He said would bring life.
3. In fact, the Law actually exacerbated the problem by establishing God's righteous demands, clearly defining sin and disobedience, and inciting something in you to disobey those demands and willfully sin against His authority!

Chapter 7 is in our bibles to help us understand that Moses and the Law are of no more use in our sanctification than they were in our salvation! So don't look to Moses for help in the war you are called to wage against sin in your life!

The chapter breaks down into three sections:

1. 7:1-6 – the Law can't help us because, thankfully, we are no longer under its jurisdiction.
2. 7:7-12 – the problem doesn't lie with the law! The Law expresses the commandments of a good and righteous God and promises life to those who obey! The Law and the commandments it contains are holy, righteous, and good (7:12).
3. 7:13-24 – the problem lies with me! Specifically, the good and holy Law of God awakens and stirs up a sinful part of me that was not and never will be redeemed – my flesh! My flesh will not, and in fact cannot, submit itself to God or His righteous Law. Therefore, applying more of that Law to my flesh to control it is not the solution. The real solution is to overcome it with a new and better power than I had in my old life before I was saved – and that power is the Holy Spirit (which is the subject of chapter 8).

This morning, I want us to look at the first of those realities that explain why the Law is of no use in our sanctification because it has lost its jurisdiction and authority over us (7:1-6). And Paul does four things in this passage that help us immensely. He provides us:

I. Knowledge that Explains (7:1)

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

Things to observe:

- Paul is writing to believers on a subject with which they are immensely familiar and thoroughly acquainted – “**Law**” (*I am speaking to those who know the concept of law and are acquainted with “the” law that is binding on a person*).
- Whether these believers were Roman Gentiles, Greek Proselytes, or Jewish Converts, they all understood the concept of law because they lived with it constantly. Politically, they were governed by Roman Law; spiritually, they were knowledgeable of the OT Scriptures (the Law of God); and religiously, they were all familiar with the Law of Moses (as shown by the conflict in Rom 14-15).
- ***Law = the expressed will of a duly constituted authority and the established penalty for disobedience.***

A. Nature of this Law – holy, righteous, and good.

- In this chapter, the law Paul has in mind is the Law of Moses – and this is clear in vs 6 where he describes it as “the old way” and defines it as “the written code.” (He refers to it this way in 2 Cor 3.)
- And he reminds his readers that they are not ignorant that this Law and its commandments are holy, righteous, and good! (7:12)

B. Extent of the power of this Law – limited to defining, prescribing, and commanding righteous conduct and rewarding obedience and punishing disobedience.

- This law can’t change character
- This law can’t excuse behavior
- This law can’t remove penalties or eliminate punishment
- All it can do is prescribe, evaluate, and reward/punish behavior based on conformity to the standards, commands, and express will of the authority over the Law.

C. Power or Authority of this Law – “jurisdiction”

- Paul states that each of his readers knows something important about the Law of Moses – that God established the Law and granted it a specific authority to govern people.
- This Law expressed the ***spiritual demand*** (no other gods), ***the moral commands*** (thou shalt/shalt not), and ***the ethical expectations*** of a righteous Lawgiver—God.
- It had the authority to speak for God as His holy voice and righteous representative over all people living in the old realm where sin reigned and death ruled!
- In other words, the righteous Lawgiver of the universe has granted jurisdiction (legally appointed authority) over all people living in the old realm, covering every aspect of their lives and for their entire lives.

D. Duration of this Jurisdiction – for as long as they lived!

- And the Law never slept nor was it ignorant – it constantly evaluated behavior and, since God demanded that behavior come out of a particular heart attitude, it also evaluated motive and intent. Nothing escaped its righteous eye; everything was laid bare before it – and no one was exempt.
- The only way to come out from under the authority of this righteous representative and the demands of its holy voice was to die.
- At the end of Romans 3, Paul set forth our hopeless state and the helpless condition we were in when we lived under the jurisdiction of the Law that ruled “LorDED” over us: *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law [all humans are under this law], so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)*

II. Illustration that Clarifies (7:2-3)

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

To help his readers better understand why the Law of Moses is of no help in their battle for sanctification, Paul cites an institution governed by the Law of Moses that all his readers would be intimately familiar with (marriage), even if they were not personally married.

A. The divine intentionality of this illustration

- This is not a random choice of an illustration – God intentionally inspired Paul to use this illustration to make two main points.
- First, the institution of marriage is very important to God, so much so that He clearly expressed His will about marriage in the Law.
- Second, the Law was powerless to bring about God’s intention for marriage in the *hearts* of those involved in a marriage.
- Which is why God eventually told Moses to add a provision to the Law that permitted divorce under certain conditions, on account of the effect those conditions often produced in a person’s heart (hardness). (Matt 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12).

B. The general nature of this illustration

- Paul discusses a common human relationship that is universally understood and regulated by laws because of its moral, social, legal, and economic consequences. (Note: he is not implying that unmarried individuals are in a less desirable spiritual condition).
- Paul is not using this illustration to change what God (Gen 2:24), Moses (Deut. 24:1-4), Jesus (Matt 5:31-32; 19:3-9), or himself (1 Cor. 7:10-16) have already said about the legitimate reasons for ending a marriage. Nor is he altering what Jesus or himself have stated elsewhere about the legitimacy of remarriage in cases of death or lawful divorce. We must be careful not to create unbiblical guilt that this passage is not meant to place on the conscience of biblically obedient people in congregations like ours who are divorced and/or remarried.
- Paul is simply saying – *“Here is an example of something that is under the jurisdiction of the Law for the entire lifetime of the*

- participants. The only thing that ends the jurisdiction of the Law in a normal marriage is death.”*
- Paul goes on to say, *“If you are not lawfully divorced, and you are in a marriage to another person while your spouse (husband) is still living – you have violated the law and are under its condemnation.”*
 - BUT – if one of the parties has died, that death frees the other party to enter into a new marriage relationship with a new partner with no fear of condemnation from the Law.

C. *The interpretational caution demanded by this illustration*

- *Paul is not trying to get us to figure out the spiritual identity of the husband that died is or of the wife who lives and remarries.*
 - *There is great danger and confusion in trying to do so. If you make the woman the church, what do you do with the fact that Paul is going to say that we are the ones that died (7:4) when in the illustration it is the husband that dies. If you make the husband the Law, it is clear that the Law did not die but that we are the ones that died to the Law and that our death released us from the Law (7:6) that continues to exist as something good, righteous, and good(7:12).*
- Paul makes three major points that he is making with this illustration of the Law’s jurisdiction over marriage.

D. *The spiritual point of this illustration*

1. You, along with everyone else under the reign of sin, used to have a relationship with the Law, just as that woman had a relationship with her husband, that lasted your entire life.
2. Someone who cared about you (God) put you in that relationship under the Law, just like someone put that woman in a relationship with her husband (think Jewish marriage customs).
3. Only death can legitimately sever the relationship you had with the Law that ended up producing such horrific fruit and resulted in such devastating bondage and enslavement.

And that is exactly what happened – you were freed from the Lordship of the Law over you through your death! ***Which leads us to the main point Paul is making – God freed you from the jurisdiction of the Law, so don’t go back to it for sanctification.***

III. Application that Liberates (7:4-5)

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

A. The Reality of Our Liberation (7:4a)

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ

What happened? *We were put to death “to the Law.”* We died with reference to/on account of the demand of the Law. The Law passed judgment on us and condemned us to death for our sins (Rom 3:19-20). And that sentence was not commuted or expunged from God’s books. There came a day when that awful death sentence was carried out, and we were “made to die.” And on that day, our obligation to the Law ceased, and its lawful jurisdiction over us ended – because we died.

How did it happen? *“Through the body of Christ.”* We were put to death with Christ when His body was nailed to the cross and executed to satisfy the penalty that the righteous Law of God demanded for sin! A penalty God Himself imposed way back in Genesis 2:15-17 when He told Adam that *“in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die!”* And God graciously extended execution day for thousands of years until one Friday morning, over 2000 years ago, that sentence was carried out on a rough Roman cross where the Son of God was put to death outside the city gates of Jerusalem, where He paid for the sins of the world – and more specifically for my sins!

However, as we are starting to see in Romans, God was doing far more than satisfying the righteous, inflexible demand of the Law when He sovereignly orchestrated the events that led to the death of His Son on the cross (Acts 4:27-30). God was up to something far more stunning than just satisfying the just demands of His righteousness through the death of a holy, acceptable, willing, sacrifice who took our place and died for our sins.

B. The Purpose of Our Liberation (7:4b)

so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

- **Here is what God was really up to . . . holy matchmaking!**
- **So that we might belong to another** – note the marriage terminology that is in play here. The KJV captures it well – “that you should be married to another!” (This is why Paul used the marriage illustration earlier in this passage)
- **To the one who has been raised from the dead** – Christ! Think again about the marriage customs of that day. A father would arrange a marriage for his son or daughter. Here God has arranged a marriage for His Son with whom He is well pleased – the Crown Prince of the universe!
- **Paul is going to pick up this imagery in 2 Cor 11:2-3:** *For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*
- **So that we may do something we could never do under our old relationship to the Law – bear fruit for God!**

C. The Necessity of Our Liberation (7:5)

For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

- What kind of fruit were we bearing/producing in our life when we were in our old life (the flesh) and “married to Moses”? Answer – fruit that came out of our sinful passion (desires) that produced death!
- And the reason for this is that the Law aroused those sinful passions in our flesh (the part of my old life that will not and cannot submit to God – Rom 8:7), and those sinful desires were strongly working to arouse different parts of my body to sin!
- Illustration: Paul wrote to people who wanted to go back to the Law that when they lived under the Law, it produced something in their flesh: *“The works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of*

anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal 5:19-21)

IV. Effect that Transforms (7:6)

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

- ***But that is not our present situation*** – we have been released from the jurisdiction of the Law (the thing that bound us and held us captive under its lordship). ***And we were released by our death to it!***
- And we have been *freed to be joined to another*: Christ. And the effect of that release and that union has been radically transformative! It has been truly life-changing!
- We serve a new and better Lord than the Law could ever be!
 - a. In a new and better way, unlike the old way we served when we were under the written code (loving eagerness rather than slavish legalism);
 - b. Under a new and better covenant (not the old covenant of the written code Moses gave you that ministered condemnation and brought death, 2 Cor 3:6-18);
 - c. By means of a new and better enablement (of the Spirit);
 - d. To new and better ends – for the pleasure of the one to whom we are espoused;
 - e. With new and better results – fruit produced by the Spirit that transforms us as people! Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no Law!”*

Conclusion

When you go back and actually listen to Moses back in his day, he knew the old covenant of the Law, as glorious as it was, would never bring righteousness to the hearts of the people under it. Here is what he said about the nation he led for more than 40 years – *“You have seen all that*

the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land (kingdom), the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.” (Deut. 29:2-4).

And he was right – living under the Law produces one of two things in people:

- Either it hardens them and turns them into proud, arrogant, harsh, judgmental, self-righteous people like the Pharisee in Lk 19, who despised the Publican praying across the street,
- Or it crushes them under the weight of its demands, drives them to deep soul despair, and robs them of all hope and joy, like the crowds Jesus saw in Matthew 9:35-36, who were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

- And that is where some of you find yourselves this morning – you have seen and heard all the incredible truth God has placed in this book, yet it doesn’t move you in the slightest. The gospel doesn’t affect you any more than a ditch dug with a shovel right next to the Grand Canyon.
- And the reason for this deadness is that you have not yet received a heart to understand, eyes to see, or ears to comprehend the immensity of what God offers you in the Gospel if you will repent and believe!

- But I am fearful that others of us this morning who are betrothed to Christ are being seduced away from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ by the tempter to live in ways that are totally disloyal to Christ! Think of what you would conclude about someone who was engaged and showed up in places, doing things, or with people that were totally incompatible with their status as an engaged person! (2 Cor 11:2-3)

- And what you need this morning is to respond to the voice of the Spirit who lives in you, whose ministry is to prepare you and escort you for the great marriage feast that is coming! Will you respond to grace?