

Freed From the Law

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[0:00] Romans chapter 7 is where we're going to be tonight.

So let's go ahead and turn there if you would in your Bibles. Romans chapter 7 verses 1 through 6 is a chunk of that chapter that I hope to get to tonight.

Let me go ahead and read the passage. Romans chapter 7 and starting with verse 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.

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.

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.

[1:15] 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.

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. 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.

Amen. It's a tremendous passage. And chapter 7 is a tremendous chapter in Romans. And probably most of us, when we think of chapter 7, we tend, if we've studied that chapter, tend to think more of the latter part of the chapter.

And we'll get to that eventually. But in this first part, first section or paragraph of the chapter, oftentimes we read this passage and we think that what we have here are some principles regarding marriage and divorce and remarriage.

But I want to say on the front end, though, the Bible does teach on those issues. And certainly, Paul mentions that in his, what really is an illustration.

[2:49] Paul's desire here is not to teach us anything concerning divorce, remarriage, adultery, any of those issues related to divorce. And so, the message tonight is not about that.

You might have been expecting that. After I read the text, you think, well, this is going to be a message on marriage. And it's not because Paul didn't intend for this to be a lesson on that.

Now, I'm going to divide this passage, this paragraph, into three parts. And they really divide very neatly into these three parts. And though you've already discovered that your pastor enjoys using alliteration in his points, you have noticed that, haven't you?

I thought you probably had. But it's interesting and always very gratifying to a pastor like me to find a passage where the main words in the text are already alliterated.

All right? And here they are. I'll just give them to you. If you'll notice there in verse 1, you have the word dominion. That starts with the letter D, doesn't it? Now, I can't just mention the word.

[3:58] It goes with the phrase, the law has dominion over man. Or we could say, the dominion of the law. Then when you skip on down there to verse 4, you see the word dead in relation to the law.

That also begins with the letter D, doesn't it? Dead to the law. So the dominion of the law, dead to the law. And then when you get down to verse 6, you have the word delivered.

Delivered in relation to the law. Delivered from the law. So there is the three-point outline for this paragraph in chapter 7. Very neat. And I would also say to you that there are some transitional phrases that lead us from one main idea or primary idea into the next one and then another one into the next.

And the first one appears in verse 1, as long as he lives. And I'll remind you of these transitional phrases as we go along. But point 1 is going to come from verse 1.

And then as long as he lives, leads us into the next section of the paragraph. And then when you get down to the end of verse 4, that completes the second part kind of movement of the paragraph. [5:16] You have the phrase that we should bear fruit to God. And then that leads us on in to the final point that he's going to make about what I believe is the reason why God has delivered us from the law so that we can bear fruit.

And we'll get to that here in just a minute. All right. So that kind of gives you the outline for the text. And now, chapter 7, as we move into this chapter, we need to realize that Paul's subject, if you haven't already guessed, and you should have since I've given you the outline, Paul's subject is still concerning the law and our relationship to the law.

And if that's not apparent just on the face of it, just from a very quick little reading of it, then we can look to the first word of verse 1 and know that this is connecting to what he's been talking about in chapter 6.

And in the New King James translation, and I believe maybe also in the New American Standard, you have the word *or* there. King James leaves it out.

The word is in the text. And so it's a conjunction. It's a coordinating conjunction. And it refers us back to something he has said. It lets us know that the subject is still the same.

[6:38] And that is primarily concerning our relationship to the law or the relationship of law with grace. In fact, it's correct to say that it's linking us back to chapter 6 and verse 14.

And you can just kind of look back there real quickly. And it says, Paul said, For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace.

Now that's the theme that carries us over in to chapter 7. And so Paul's going to set out here in this chapter and teach that. I would say prove it, because he's going to use some kind of an illustration here, but the illustration is not a proof of this truth.

The teaching, the application is the proof of it. And that'll become clear, I hope, as we go along. So let's get right into it and find out how Paul teaches us that Christians are not under the law, but under grace.

And Paul's going to begin there with verse 1, with what I think is accurate, it's accurate to say, is the universal problem for all mankind.

[7:53] Not just, certainly not believers, but for mankind in general. It's a universal problem. A universal reality. And it's this, all humankind are, and here's point number one, dominated by the law.

Dominated by the law. We're under the dominion of the law. That's what he said there in verse 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.

So there's the idea. All mankind, he's speaking in general here. All humankind, this is a, this is a, a reality, a universal problem that all are dominated under the dominion of the law.

And so, that's point number one. Dominated by the law, resulting in condemnation. That's the result. That's the full-blown point.

Dominated by the law, all humankind, resulting in condemnation. Now, let's ask that text just a few questions here.

[9:06] In the first place, to whom is Paul speaking? I might as well tell you right now that as you, if you were to take this text and consult all the commentaries that you could get your hands on, you would discover that there are a number of different judgments or, or opinions about this text.

It's very complicated. complicated. In a sense, although, the main point he's making is not complicated at all. But one of the hang-ups or one of the little bumps in the road here is trying to decide to whom is he speaking.

He says, brethren, right, there in verse 1. That ought to clue us in, although there are some who would say that when he said brethren, he was speaking of his brethren in, in, in the sense of Jews. That he had a Jewish audience here. And so he's addressing Jews. And so therefore the law that he is speaking of is just strictly the Mosaic law. But I don't believe that's the case.

I believe that he's addressing all believers. I believe he's addressing all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles and the principle that he's teaching here about the dominion of the law or being under the law or rather being under grace rather than under the law.

[10 : 35] This principle is for all Christians for us to understand. Paul's speaking to believers, he says, who know something.

And we've, we have found this phrase a number of times in our study of Romans. In fact, just recently chapter six and even before that, Paul liked to say that, don't you know?

And of course, again, his idea is this is something you should know if you're a believer. And of course, he adds a little parentheses there. I speak to those who know the law.

Now, the grammar there suggests he's not saying I'm just speaking to those who do know it. I'm speaking to all of you. You all know this. You all know this to be true. This principle, this, this truth that I'm about to not only tell you very plainly, but also illustrate for you.

Now, what is it about the law that they know? That's the second question we ought to ask.

[11 : 44] What is it that they know about it? Well, it's a truth about it that is common, should be common knowledge among believers.

It is really another one of these self-evident truths, or we could use the word axiom. An axiom. This is true all the time and it's self-evident.

It's a very general truth and here it is. The law has dominion over man as long as he lives. Now, there's the truth. Now, what part of that is difficult to understand?

We know that and Paul is speaking in general terms here. He's talking about, he's just giving the bear, the axiom, the law has dominion over you as long as you live.

That is, everybody knows that. I mean, you die if someone dies after committing a crime. Brother Tom, dies after committing a crime, we don't drag his dead body into the courtroom and have him stand trial there for the crime.

[12 : 53] The law is no longer over him. He's dead. It's over. And so that's just a very common thing, common knowledge. It's a self-evident truth.

The third question is, to what law is Paul referring? Not a specific law, I mean, what group of laws is Paul talking about here?

I believe Paul's talking about the law in general. I believe his audience is both Jews and Gentiles, and the Jews, of course, have the law, the Mosaic law, and they were very proud of that, but the Gentiles were not given the law, and yet they do have a law.

I don't think we have any Jews in here tonight, but before you were born again, you are under God's moral law, the law of nature, the general law that God has given, and you know that law, and you're responsible for that law, whether you recognize the Mosaic law, or the Ten Commandments, or even know any of them, or even think they apply to you, you know, because God has put that knowledge in you, that you're under a set of laws.

There is a law over us, and so I think Paul's talking about God's moral law, and not just the Mosaic law, and so, you know, it's pretty easy to see that everybody really knows he or she is under the law.

[14 : 23] You say, I don't think that they do. We live in a lawless society, but I'm telling you that even those who seem to be lawless and just flaunt their lawlessness and rejection of any kind of authority or law, they know in their hearts they're under law.

They know it. And you see that, you know, exhibited quite easily. And there are a number of things that clue you into that.

I mean, there is, number one, you'll see reactions of pride when it comes to law, the law, doing the right thing. How about if we change the word to right and wrong?

A good old fashioned distinction. everybody knows right and wrong. And there are those you'll see pride come out in regard to the law.

And it manifests itself in a couple of ways. You know, there are those who have a great deal of pride when it comes to keeping the law. And they want everybody to know it, that they're law-abiding citizens and flaunt their lawfulness justice, as if somehow that elevates them and maybe makes them better than others who are not law-keepers.

[15 : 44] And I'm not talking about safety, I'm talking about lost people. In any culture, though it may be difficult to see, but every human being on this planet knows the law.

what's right and what's wrong. They've been born with that. Now, there could be perversions of it. There can certainly be disagreements about exactly what is right and exactly what is wrong or what is not wrong.

But, basically, the idea is true. Paul is saying this axiom is true. Everyone's under the law and you know this to be the case. And we can see it through pride. And that pride also manifests itself in other ways, not just in a putting on display your lawfulness.

Those who try to conceal their unlawfulness. Now, who taught them that? We're not talking about believers again. We're talking about just people.

And there is that innate, that inborn tendency to want to conceal when you've done something wrong. wrong. Or are doing something wrong.

[17:00] And so it proves, you see, that everyone is under the law. They're under the dominion of the law because they react to that in expressions of pride.

And there are those who also react to it with expressions of what we might call projection. Again, we're talking about unbelievers who maybe are involved in a certain kind of wrong activity, a wrong thing, but instead of admitting the wrongness in their life, they point to someone and say, look, those people over there, look at what they're doing.

And they're committing the exact same sin, but see, what we're doing is projecting our own shortcomings, our own sinfulness, our own law-breaking, to someone else.

And that's proof, you see, when you see that happen with an unbeliever, that's proof that everyone's under the law. They're all under it. And not only pride and projection, but there's also certainly feelings of personal guilt and depression.

Lost people have feelings of guilt when they've done something wrong. Is that just something that happens because you have the Spirit of God living in you and you're a born-again believer?

[18:27] It ought to happen then. But I'm talking about lost people. And the point I'm trying to make is that the law that Paul is referring to is just the general law.

We could say it would include the Mosaic law, but also the law of nature. And everyone is under that and everyone experiences certain types of feelings and reactions when they do something wrong.

So we're talking about this domination by the law and it results in condemnation. Now, the fourth question is, what does Paul mean by the dominion of the law?

Now, this is not something that believers know, unbelievers rather, know theologically. But we ought to know this. When he says dominion, and by the way, some translations, I think, have the word authority, and that is correct enough, but the word itself, authority, says something a little different to us.

Maybe the correct word would be lordship, or mastery. This version, King James, I think, does the same, uses the word dominion.

[19:50] Another uses jurisdiction. The idea is that the law is over us, and it holds mastery over us. We are literally slaves to the dominion of the law.

We'll get to what that dominion consists of here in just a minute. As a matter of fact, in chapter 6 and verse 9, we have that same word used in relation to something else, where the Bible says, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more, death no longer has dominion over him.

That's the same word. Only here it's in relation to death. A little bit later in that chapter, in chapter 6, verse 14, the Bible says, for sin shall not have dominion over you, dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace.

We quoted that one a moment ago. But there's that word again, dominion, only here it's in relation to sin. And Paul uses the same word in relation to law, death, sin, and not necessarily in that order. In fact, we could put it this way, Paul ties those three things together, law, sin, and death, and he ties them together with the word dominion. Dominion.

[21:03] See, the law reveals the sin, and the sin leads to death. And everyone, everyone, every member of the human race is under that dominion of the law.

The law revealing sin, leading to death, and it is on all of us. We need to learn maybe a few things about the law.

First of all, the purity of the law. Even though we seem to be, and Paul seems to be casting a very negative light upon the law, the law is not an evil thing.

It is pure. Paul is going to tell us that a little bit later in verse 12 of this chapter. It is the pure law because it is God's righteous law.

Also, there is the purpose of the law, and what is the purpose of the law? It is to drive us to Christ and to the cross. And that is why I believe that it is a good thing in your gospel presentation to include the law in our gospel presentation, to remind people that they are lawbreakers based upon the word of God, even if you use the ten commandments.

[22:35] Why? To make them feel bad about themselves? No, it is to highlight the reality of sin and to drive them to the only remedy. The only remedy, and that's Christ and his cross.

So there's the purity of the law and the purpose of the law, but there is also the power of the law. We need not forget this, and this brings us to what we might call the bad side of it, or the negative side.

The power of the law is what? It's condemnation. It's condemnation, because we've all broken the law.

The law, in that sense, then becomes a burden, it becomes a yoke. The Jews thought that they could keep it, and they designed a myriad of other laws to supposedly help them keep the laws, and no matter what they added to it, they still couldn't keep it.

It was a yoke, it was a burden, because the power of the law is to condemn. It has no power to save, just to condemn. Again, that's why I say that the law is used as a schoolmaster, the Bible says.

[23:41] It's to teach us about our sinfulness, to open our eyes to our sinfulness, and to drive us to the only remedy for that, and that's the cross. But the power of the law is condemnation, and the penalty is death.

Death, eternal death. And so here's the axiom. It's the universal problem. The law has dominion over a man all of his life, all of her life, not just a man, but also women as well.

The fifth question in this will lead us to the second point of the message in the chapter. That is, what is the solution? You know, every problem needs to have a solution.

I've already named it a number of times, but let's see what Paul has to say about that, and that does lead us to the next point, and here is that first transitional statement, and we find it there at the end of verse one, the law has dominion over man, how long?

As long as he lives. That brings us into the next movement of Paul's thought here, his logic, and that is that all believers are dead to the law.

[24:58] We're dead to the law, resulting in conversion, conversion to Christ. Let me read Romans 7, 2, and 4 again, and you just follow along in your Bibles.

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. So he's using an illustration here, isn't he? But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

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.

And then he finishes that there in verse 4, therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law.

Through what? The body of Christ. The cross. That you may be married to another. And who would that be? That'd be Christ.

[26:06] And he says to him who was raised from the dead, that's Jesus Christ, that we should bear fruit to God. So Paul uses an illustration here. Not to prove his point.

Illustration doesn't prove, it illustrates the proof, the truth. And some have taken this to be somewhat of an allegory, you know.

and if you do that, that is an allegory, that means you're going to make every part of the illustration stand for something else or some spiritual truth or give each part of the illustration some kind of identity.

But if you do that, you're going to have all kinds of problems. That's what makes this text or has made it so difficult for many people because they approach you thinking that we've got to pull out of this, you know, every part of this illustration has to fit here and it doesn't.

It just doesn't. Paul's not intending to do that. So you can't assign meanings to each part of it, you know. And specifically, the husband, that's what we would like to assign some identity to the husband here.

[27:21] Who is this husband in the illustration? For example, the husband, some would say, represents the law. I mean, that kind of fits with the illustration, doesn't it?

And so the wife is the man or woman and we're under the dominion of the law. That's our husband right now. But then we have problems.

Then, let's see, if he dies, then I'm free. Right? Free to do what? Marry another. And that, of course, would be Christ. So my next husband would be Christ.

There's only one problem with that. The law is not dead. The believer is dead to the law, but the law is not dead.

It's not dead. It lives. And it has value. Remember, it's good. It's pure. Paul's going to make that point a little bit later. In fact, I'll just read it to you.

[28:21] The law is holy, he said. There, verse 12. It's holy and the commandment is holy. The law is holy, the commandment is holy, and just to make sure that you are missing the point, he says, and it's just and it's good.

The law is good. So the husband in the illustration can't be the law. The husband doesn't have to represent anybody. In fact, you could put yourself in the place of the husband, or you could put yourself in the place of the wife in this illustration.

Because the point is, and this is just a simple analogy or the illustration, drawing from the marriage law, he's just making one simple, single point, and that is that no law has jurisdiction over a person after that person is dead.

And that's all in the world that this illustration means. D. Martin Lloyd Jones preached, I don't remember now how many years, through the book of Romans.

Took him a long time. Tom probably remembers. Long time, but we have, of course, all those sermons in a set. I don't have that set, but it's a tremendous commentary in the book of Romans.

[29:38] And he highlighted what Paul's intent is here with this illustration. He did it with three points. It's what we ought to get from this.

Number one, a woman who is married to a man is under the authority of that man. Now, I know that doesn't really make much sense. We don't really see that very often in our culture.

But remember, we're talking about Paul's day. All right? And so here's the point. A woman under the marriage laws, a woman who is married to a man is under the authority of that man.

And he says there, for the woman who has a husband. You see that in the illustration? A woman who has a husband. And by the way, the word husband there is from a word in the Greek that's quite unusual.

It's not normally translated husband. husband. And it is a word that means under the power of a man. Ooh, it just makes well.

[30:41] That's the idea. So he's talking about this kind of scenario. A woman who has, who is under the power of a man, is bound by the law of her husband, the law of marriage.

And there, the second word for husband is the normal word, oner. And it does mean husband there. And so there's the idea. All right, so likewise, then, if we're going to take the illustration, the illustration is helping us understand the truth.

And so likewise, the human race is under the power of the law and bound to the law because no one's free to just go out and make their own set of laws.

You know, I don't like the law about murder, so I'll just make that okay and, you know, we'll just change the laws. It can't be done because these are God's laws. And all are bound to them.

The second thing he says, the subjection of the wife to a husband in marriage is a lifelong subjection. It doesn't necessarily work out that way in our world either.

[31:53] but believe me, in Paul's day, a wife could not divorce her husband. She had no even opportunity to do that.

So just using that illustration, his readers would have understood that. The wife is subject to the husband and she is subject to him in that marriage as long as she lives.

It's lifelong. Likewise, then, we are under the dominion of God's law for this life. And then the third point, in spite of the permanent nature of this relationship and the resulting authority, there is nevertheless the possibility of entering into another relationship.

How? It becomes possible if one of the parties dies. That's Paul's point in the illustration. Just as simple as that.

See, it's not hard to understand. And that is exactly what has happened to all of us. That is, if you're a born-again believer.

[33:03] And the party that died in that relationship with the law was you. We died. We died in Christ.

And so he applies the truth. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law. That's your first husband.

Death has occurred and so now through the body, you've died to the law through the body of Christ. So now you may be married to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

that leads us to the final transition and the final point. And I've already read it and here it is, that we should bear fruit to God.

So third, delivered from the law, resulting in consecration, full consecration to the Lord.

[34:09] Full separated unto him. And for him. We could use the word sanctification. He says in verses five and six, for when we were in the flesh, we're talking about were, this is when you were an unbeliever.

Not talking about believers who can get in the flesh sometimes and we all do that. We're talking about prior to conversion, prior to salvation, when you were in the flesh, unsaved, unregenerated, the sinful passions, he says here, which were aroused by the law.

They came to light, they raised their ugly head. You know, we still have a tendency for this. You know, we joke about it sometimes with our kids and children.

You know, when we tell them what not to do, that's exactly what they're going to do. You can't do this and that's exactly what they want to do. You can't go there and that's where they want to go.

That's that nature, that flesh, the sinful passions.

And so the law says here, this is the way you're to live and this is what I do not want you to do and this is what you must do and here are my laws and our flesh and our unregenerate as unregenerate people.

[35:39] The sinful passions are aroused by that. You can't do that. And that's working in our members, every part of us. Again, mouth, ears, eyes, hands, feet, all of it.

And it's producing something. Fruit to death. death. Fruit to death. And maybe some of that fruit looks good, but as unregenerate people who are under the dominion of the law, all of our fruit is death.

Death. Then probably the best two words in the entire text, but now. You see the contrast.

First he was talking about who you were. That's who you were. you're not to live that way anymore.

And if you do live at any time in the way that you were, then that's inconsistent with your new relationship, your new marriage.

But now, see, we've been delivered from the law. That mean we don't have to obey it anymore? No.

[36:57] we've been delivered from its dominion. And with that dominion, its condemnation and ultimate death.

We've been delivered having died, we've died to what we were held by, dominated by, held captive by, so that we would serve in the newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

I'm living now and trying to somehow earn our way and try to appease the guiltiness in our hearts to appease that somehow or to compensate for that by getting out the Bible and saying I'm going to make sure I do this and this and every jot and tittle.

To try to live according to the written code. You can't do it. And if you think you can and try, it won't work. And so we're not to do that, rather we're to serve in the newness of the spirit.

And here's what it all comes down to. Everything that he is saying here, it all comes down to this.

Why did God deliver us from the dominion of the law?

[38:20] Why did he do that? He did that so that we could be joined to Christ. There was no other way. We could not have two spouses.

We were delivered from the law so that we could be joined to Christ. And why did God do that?

Because we're special to him? we're worthy of it.

You know that's not it. How about because God loves us? You want to say yes to that and he certainly does but that is not it primarily.

Why then? Why? What was God's objective in saving us? That we would bear fruit to him.

That we should serve in the newness of the spirit. Here's where obeying the law does come in. We do obey it.

[39 : 35] to merit something from God? No. But to serve him in the newness of our spirit. In fact we are now free.

More free to obey his law. In fact we now have a freedom we didn't have before. That we should serve him in the newness of the spirit.

And that you know is the burden this standard of the law. We could not bear it. Maybe we should examine ourselves and ask where is the fruit?

I mean as believers as those who have been delivered from the dominion of the law. So the we could be joined with the one who was raised from the dead, Christ.

So that now we should serve him in the newness of the spirit. Then we should ask ourselves and examine ourselves where is that fruit? Is it there?

[40 : 54] What kind of fruit is it? What kind of fruit are we bearing? fruit of the death or is it fruit to God?

To God.