

“DEAD TO THE LAW.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Romans 7:1-6

Introduction.

So far in Romans we have considered the universal problem of sin and how hopeless our situation is. Then starting in 3:21 we heard the universal solution to sin in the Gospel and how we can be made right and reconciled with God, by being justified by grace through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus.

Our sin must be perfectly, justly punished, and God’s law must be perfectly kept. Jesus did that. He came to die for our sins and live for our righteousness.

In chapter six Paul turned from justification to sanctification and to addressing objections. The first being if we are saved by grace, and where sin abounds grace abounds more, then why worry about sin. Let's just go on sinning, and show how great the grace of free justification really is and go ahead and sin some more. No, we have died to sin in Christ, who died for our sin.

As Paul says elsewhere, “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

Then Paul addresses another objection. What about the law? If we aren’t under the law but under grace, why not sin? No, we are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to Christ. But Paul didn’t address the law part in last weeks text, so he picks up on that here in chapter 7.

Romans 7:1, The principle.

The Law was given for this present life. When we die the law has no more dominion in our life.

The meaning of the Law.

Paul in addressing Jews in the church in Rome has in mind the Law of Moses in particular, meaning that standard of conduct we are expected to live up to.

The Law serves several functions. It reveals the holy and righteous character and nature of God. And in doing that it exposes our sin and unholiness. Doing that, the Law

becomes a curse as it condemns us for breaking the Law of God and failing to obey it perfectly. The Law increases our sin.

So God gives us the Law and tells us we must keep it perfectly in order to live, so the Law creates despair which is meant to drive us to Jesus. And once we find our righteousness and acceptance in Christ, only then does the Law become good to us, it becomes the light for walking the path of righteousness and holiness that is pleasing to God by the power of God.

Romans 7:2-3, The illustration, marriage analogy.

Paul uses an illustration every culture can understand.

The point is simple. When a wife is married she is bound to her husband until death do them part, when he dies she is released from her vow. Death does that. The death of the husband makes her dead to the law of marriage. The husband isn't the law, the law binds the two of them.

The wife is under her husband until he dies, then she is free to marry and come under another husband.

We are the woman married to our first husband, Adam, the old covenant of works. Adam is the federal head of the entire human race and his sin is our sin and brought us the fruit of death. "Like a woman married to an old, cruel, mean husband, there is not much she can do about it. While she is married she is tied to that husband" (Ray Stedman).

Romans 7:4, The application of the illustration to the believer.

What a great verse, what a glorious Gospel.

Romans 7:4 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.

In the illustration the husband died, in the application of the illustration it is the wife who died, and then is resurrected to be married to a resurrected husband. Through Jesus we die to the Law.

Four truths in verse 4:

First, Christians have been put to death to the law. They didn't do it, God did it. They are released from the obligations of the Law of Moses regarding rituals, festivals, Passover, circumcision, etc. But in a deeper way all believers are free from the law's

authority to condemn us, and free from the powerlessness of the law to change us and sanctify us.

God ended our first marriage by putting us to death so He could resurrect us for a new marriage.

Second, God did this through the body of Christ, by His death as our propitiation on the cross.

Christ voluntarily subjected Himself for a time, being born under the law. He perfectly kept the demands of the law, was made a curse under the law, so He could redeem those under the law and set them free from being condemned by the curse of the law. We are released from our relationship with the law by the death of Christ.

He delivered us from the yoke of the law, in order to graft us into His own body. He kept the Law we could not keep so we could die to the law and its curse, and live to Christ.

Galatians 4:4-5 When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Third, the reason God did this was that you might be joined to or belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead.

We are under the authority of the Law until we die to the Law and come under the authority of another husband, who is Christ. In Christ we are dead to the law and this allows us to be remarried, to marry someone else, namely Jesus who rose from the dead.

Since the new husband is resurrected the new marriage will last forever. There will be no till death do us part.

One difference between the marriage analogy and Christ, is that we are not free from the law to do as we please, as the widow is free from her husband to do as she please. We cannot divorce the law and have no husband as it were, floating around in no relationship. The reason God set us free was so we could be reconciled to Him by being united to Christ's death and resurrection.

Fourth, God's goal in doing this is in order that you might bear fruit for God, in contrast to shameful fruit of the first marriage.

That we may bear fruit for God.

Paul always adds the cause of God's grace, for His glory and for good, for the good works prepared before hand for us to do, for the sake of bearing fruit in keeping with repentance and faith. Good works follow faith.

One of the great ends and purposes of marriage is to bear fruit, a fruitful marriage. And it is no different in our marriage to Christ, to bear fruit, to be fruitful for God. As marriage is created to be fruitful, so is the Christian life. If you are joined to Christ, then produce fruit.

John 15:4-8 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. *Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

I want you to hear a profound truth in this statement, that you may bear fruit for God. I am not going to dwell on it this morning because I plan to return to this verse 4 on Serve Sunday. But take this much to heart and meditate on it between now and three weeks from now.

Your life matters to God. You may question whether your existence here on earth matters or makes a difference, but that you exist, affirms your life matters to God.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

From before the foundations of the earth God was thinking about you, preparing for your life on earth. God delivered you from your fruitless marriage, to a fruitful marriage, He forgave you and put His Spirit in you. The reason Jesus did what He did is so we could bear good fruit. You matter to Him, what you say and do matters to Him. Let's be fruitful for Christ and His glory.

Romans 7:5, the need for this new relationship.

The first marriage was a disaster. The law didn't help us, the law made us behave worse. We desperately needed a better husband. Remember we are talking about the law here, not your husband.

As long as we are under the law all we can do is sin, and keep on sinning and sinning even more. Lawlessness increases to more lawlessness. In the flesh, the law stirs up more sinful passions.

To be in the flesh, means to be utterly devoid of the Spirit and therefore hopeless and helpless in our sin. It means that by nature we are sinful, there is nothing good or pure in us and the only power we have is the power to sin, to bear bad fruit, the fruit of death.

There are only two paths when it comes to bearing fruit in this life. Either you will bear fruit for death or you will bear fruit for God. There is no in-between, just like either being a slave to sin or a slave to Christ.

Nothing done before being a Christian is a good work, but a dead work, a dead work because it is done out of sinful motives, selfish desires, from pride, greed, lust, ambition. They proceed from self-love, self-gratification, self-righteousness. In the flesh, we are totally self-centered.

Romans 8:7-8 The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

We are all legalist, we all by nature want to find ways to keep the law, ways to make ourselves pleasing or acceptable to God, ways to justify ourselves. We hate being hopeless, helpless and completely dependent on God for our salvation.

Do you know what the marks or signs are of someone trying to live under the Law?

Pride, proud of successes, boasting in accomplishments, achievements, how good he is doing. Can't admit error, mistakes, perfectionism. Critical spirit, judging, pointing out faults, pulling others down. Not 100% sure you are forgiven, performance anxiety, you think you have to do your part for God or do something for God. You feel unworthy, unacceptable, rejected.

There is no true fruit of holiness and righteousness under the law, that comes only when we are free from the law. Fruit comes only by the Spirit in a relationship with Christ.

Romans 7:6, the consequences of this new relationship.

The new life of the Spirit.

The problem with the first marriage under the law is that a person with an unchanged heart can't do it. A person without the Holy Spirit can't keep the law.

Under the old covenant there was no power to obey. Under the new covenant in Christ we are promised the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to obey.

This is Paul's answer to the objection of Romans 6:15, "Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?" The reason being under grace and not under law produces love and not lawlessness is God pours out His Spirit into the hearts and the Spirit brings newness of life from the inside out.

Romans 5:5 God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Implications and application.

"Is the law in Scripture still binding on the believer?" The answer is both Yes and No. No, we are free from the law in the sense that obedience to it is not the basis for our acceptance with God and we need not fear its condemning power. Jesus came not simply to die for our sins but also to live for our righteousness. He obeyed the law perfectly in our place, and his righteousness is then credited or accounted to us when we put our faith in him. The law is no longer our lord. Jesus is.

But there is also a sense in which we still sustain a relationship to the law. It is God's loving guide to how we should live. It is the moral compass that directs our daily steps. But the motivation of our obedience to the law has radically changed. "Why do we serve? Not because the law is our Master and we have to, but because Christ is our husband and we want to. Not because obedience leads to salvation, but because salvation leads to obedience . . . The law says, do this and you will live. The gospel says, you live, so do this" (John Stott, Sam Storms).

Paul is pleading with us to die to sin and die to the law. Let your sin and lawlessness lead you to Christ. The law is meant to kill you. Christ died so we could die to the law, so we could be free. He kept the law so you don't have to. He was perfect, righteous. He gave his blood for you. We can't keep the law, even our motivation to do it, is from evil, self. Die to the law so that you can be released from captivity and slavery, and set free by the Spirit to walk in newness of life by God's grace and power.

Galatians 2:19-20 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.