

Romans 7v1-6 Serving in the new way of the Spirit

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The gospel has been gladly and thankfully received by many of you here today and of course by many others all over the world. It is **such a relief to know** that your "self effort" does not and cannot provide the righteousness you need to be accepted by God.

One good example that sticks in my mind is the testimony of a young man struggling with **gay tendencies**; he was so overwhelmed getting to grips with the fact that God has compassionately provided the righteousness he so desperately needed. It was a delight for him to know that Jesus had kept the Law for him and given it to him as a free gift.

The same could be said of **many others**; alcoholics, adulterers, blasphemers, compulsive liars, porn surfers... even some self righteous ego strokers have joined the ranks of those who have come to know and see...

It is a wonderful thing to not be under the Law but rather to rejoice in the benefits of being **under grace**. There is such freedom and relief in knowing that self effort does not cut it with God.

But does that mean the repentant gay believer continues to freely pursue same sex relationships? Does being under grace mean that alcoholics, adulterers, blasphemers, compulsive liars, porn surfers and the self righteous ego strokers continue in their lawless ways of living?

Once again the answer given by Paul in *Romans 6:15* is *By no means!* Yes it is true that you as a believer are justified by faith alone, **but it is equally true** that people who are justified by faith alone will not sin more but less.

Why doesn't **freedom from the Law** result in lawless people? Why don't justified people sin more and not less?

1 Give attention to this puzzling life style question

In the previous passage *6:16-23* Paul answered that question by taking us as it were for a **visit to the slave market**. There he showed how God works in freeing those who are slaves to sin and they become slaves of God, but he makes no mention of the Law.

Some sense then needs to be made of this fact that believers are not under the Law and yet there is (there will be, there must be) more practical righteousness and service to the glory of God in their lives.

Why will you sin less and not more (be more law abiding / holy) even though you are no longer under the Law?

Why will you **be less inclined** to indulge in same sex relationships, or boasting or greed or addiction... even though you are no longer under the law? Why will holiness be a priority on your daily agenda even though self effort does not provide the righteousness you need to be accepted by God?

This is a **puzzling question** that Paul goes on to tackle in this next paragraph from Romans

2 Give attention to this enlightening life saving answer

Whereas before Paul invited the readers to visit the slave market; he now reminds them of a well known **legal principle and practice**.

Romans 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?

Hollywood has used that principle to produce a number of movies where a person hears the sad news that they only have **a few weeks to live**. Then making use of credit that person goes ahead and does everything he ever wanted to do.

He swipes his card for flights and clothes and cars and food ...running up impossibly huge bills; knowing he will never have to pay since he will be dead before the account is printed! He knows – when we die our debts die with us.

You can't claim anything from a dead man. It is very hard to prosecute somebody buried under the ground in a cemetery. Hollywood hadn't made any movies in Paul's day so he instead uses a different example

Romans 7:2 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.

Imagine **a married couple** – Jack and Jill. They are bound by the law to be man and wife as long as both of them are alive. If Jack has an affair with another woman he has clearly committed adultery.

When does the law no longer bind Jack and Jill to be husband and wife? It is when one of them dies. Death breaks the marriage bond. Death ends the claim that the law has over a person. If Jack dies Jill can marry again with no fear of committing adultery.

Verses 1-3 can be put in a single phrase: **legal obligation ends with death**. Now extend that same legal principle into the context of the current issue.

7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ...

2.1 You have been released from the authority of the Law

The Law has **authority over every person** born into this world. Everyone bound to the Law is in serious trouble with God. We have already seen self effort in keeping the Law always fails.

Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

If you are under the Law you are bound to the Law and since you can't perfectly keep the Law you are under a curse. That applies universally to all people of all ages with the exception of those who (back to the legal principle Paul just illustrated using Jack and Jill)

Romans 7:4 ... you also have died to the law through the body of Christ,

The simple but marvellous truth is this; **a death must take place if one is to be released from the authority of the law.** And the liberating life saving truth is that those who have received the gospel by faith have *7:4 died to the law...*

This you have done *through the body of Christ v4* or as indicated in a parallel statement in *6:5 ...the believer is united with Christ* so that his death becomes our death. **Christ bore the curse** that the Law required and He fulfilled perfect obedience that the Law demanded. So in him you are released from being tied to the Law

7:6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive...

You therefore are **free from the claims** the law has over you. When the law says *Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before me"* and when you do on occasion fail that law has no authority over you – since *you also have died to the law.*

The same applies in **every other aspect of the law**; *Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image ...5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them ...7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain ...8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...12 "Honour your father and your mother ... 13 "You shall not murder ...14 "You shall not commit adultery ...15 "You shall not steal16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour ...17 "You shall not covet ...*

But do take note that Paul does not end the verse with *you also have died to the law.* He continues ...**giving the purpose** for this death you died to the law *...4b so that you may belong to another,*

God's purpose for arranging this death for us in Christ is not that you become an independent free agent doing as you please, but rather that you belong to another. Yes you have been released from the law, like the women in marriage, so that you could marry again.

The new marriage is with **the risen living Jesus Christ** *... to him who has been raised from the dead,*

2.2 You now belong to Jesus Christ

Your **salvation includes** “liberation” or release from the Law and “union” with a living person. You now **belong to the Risen One**. This Risen One is the very one who gave the Law and perfectly kept its demands.

This person you are now joined to and belong to is alive. You not bound to a list of commandments – *v7 the old way of the written code*. You are not bound to a catalogue of duties. You are now in a spiritual union – and loving relationship - with the all glorious, all satisfying, every living majestic Person – Jesus Christ.

Look at what it was like in **the old days** when you were joined to your previous partner. They were days where you were driven by the flesh and sin. No matter how hard you tried to keep the Law, your allegiance to the old master stirred up passion in such a way that you constantly broke the Law *bearing fruit for death*.

Romans 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.

But not anymore now that you belong to Jesus Christ; because there is a clearly defined God intended purpose for belonging to Jesus in this new union and era *...in order that we may bear fruit for God*.

This fruit is nothing other than holy living or as described in *Romans 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life*. Fruit means less sin and more righteousness.

2.3 You who belong to Jesus Christ ought to sin less

If *v5* describes the situation from which we have been released, *v6* describes **the new situation** we enjoy as a result of that release.

Romans 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.

Freedom from the Law does not mean the end of **God’s claim on your life**. His claim on and over your life continues to be a fact you cannot avoid. What however has changed is the way that claim is worked out in your life.

It is now exerted in **a new and powerful way**. It is *so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code*.

The old way was the way of the “letter”. It was an **external demand**. This old way is in contrast to the new way of the Spirit. You who belong to Jesus Christ ought to be bearing fruit for God because God has put His Spirit with in you.

The Law is now not an external demand but an inward inclination of a changed and influenced heart.

Why will you sin less and not more even though you are no longer under the Law?

It is because you have been released from the bondage of the Law to fulfil the purposes of God for your life by belonging to Christ and bearing fruit for God serving in the new way of the Spirit.

Paul puts it like this in 2 Corinthians 3:5 *Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

God had promised that he would do this

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers ... 33 but this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts...

He promises something **very similar through Ezekiel**

Ezekiel 11:19 and I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 36:26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

We believers are **beneficiaries of the new covenant promises**. As such you are not left with the burden of trying to keep the external demands of the Law. It is not the old way of the written code but the new way of the Spirit that will give you the holy desires of the Law.

Conclusion

As one **living under grace** you have been released from the demands of the Law. As one living under grace God's purpose for you is that you belong to Christ so that you sin less and less...

You will **not overcome** your particular struggles with sin by just trying harder or doing a course or even having an accountability group.

You and I are **inadequate** – we will constantly be disappointed and frustrated unless we are really under grace; seeing and believing and trusting God as we live in this new way of the Spirit (more in chapter 8).