

Romans 7:2-6

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Romans 7 begins by explaining that there was actually something contained *in the Law* that demonstrated that there was a way to be *loosed from a particular aspect of the Law itself*, namely, the death of a spouse. In this instance, death freed one from *the Law* of marriage. This is not the only instance where the Law actually made a provision in one case to be released from the Law in another case.

One such obvious example is temple service of the priests on the sabbath days. The Law stated that no man may do any servile work on a sabbath day. And yet, the priests and Levites who served in the temple were commanded to carry out duties which are literally defined as servile work on the sabbaths. Jesus specifically addresses this in Matthew 12:

Matthew 12:5

Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

The Law then, though binding, has within it a contraindication. Death itself was a provision God made within the Law which freed a spouse from the Law of marriage. This is why Paul says, *I speak to them that know the law*. He is calling their attention to this fact, if indeed they actually knew the law as well as they thought. I believe God *purposely* included this within the Law of Moses with the Body of Christ in mind, not just as an articulation of His righteousness.

Remember, everything God did and does in dealing with us in the dispensation of grace *must be Lawful*. Just as our justification required the legal action of Christ's work on the cross, and His death, burial, and resurrection, because God could not just decide to overlook our sins, as He is bound by the very nature of His righteousness and justice, there is also a *Lawful means* for our liberty in Christ. He could not simply give us that liberty apart from a legal process which allowed Him to do so.

God cannot violate His own righteousness, and the Law *is* God's righteous norms and standards. That means God could never violate the Law. Therefore *there had to be something contained within the Law itself* that would be able to serve as a *legal basis* for God's operation in actually *freeing us from the Law*. And that thing is death and marriage.

In the last lesson we discussed Romans 7:1, and how that the Law itself is binding, and has *dominion* over a man, so long as he remains alive. We however have been baptized into Christ's death (Rom 6:3). We have discussed at length what that means in regards to the nature of our inner man, and the implications of that death. We learned in Romans 6:7 that he who is dead is therefore freed from sin. Paul goes on to explain that sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the Law but under grace, making the correlation between the Law and sin. Romans 7 now is going to expound the nature of how it is we can be freed from the Law itself. In Romans 6:14 Paul tells us outright that we are not under the Law, and he tells us we are now under the dominion of grace, and we even understand from chapter 6 it is through death that this is accomplished, but he doesn't elaborate. Here, with this illustration of marriage and death, is that elaboration.

The purpose of this passage is not to instruct or inform us on the practice of divorce or remarriage. This passage serves as an illustration of a spiritual truth, just as when Paul used the servant/master relationship to illustrate our bondage to sin. Marriage in fact is the perfect illustration here, because of the nature of the spiritual operation God performed in us.

It is here in Romans that we first learn of this truth, but it is alluded to later on as well:

1 Corinthians 6:15-17

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

We see here we are *one spirit with the Lord*.

Ephesians 5:25-32

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Here we see that not only are we one spirit with the Lord, but beyond that, we are one flesh. Paul is quoting here from Genesis 2:24; in verse 23, Adam says of Eve *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."* This is the essence of what Paul is going to refer to as *the mystery of godliness*, that the life of Christ—that *God Himself*—would be manifest in our present, mortal, fleshly bodies, that the two would become *one flesh*.

1 Timothy 3:15-16

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

As I said previously, this doctrine is first found in seed form here in Romans 7.

Romans 7:2-3

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

In this illustration of Romans 7, the woman is the inner man, it is who you are in the person of the soul. The husband then is the flesh, that is, the outer man with the remnants of the Adamic nature stored in its memory, which is what Paul will call the law of sin that is in our members in verse 23.

We are loosed, or set free, from the law of the husband, from the law of the outer man, and therefore from the flesh itself. We are positionally and judicially dead in our physical body. Remember in Romans 6 we learned that we are *dead to sin* (6:2, 6:11); it does not say sin itself is dead. *We are dead* to the penalty, power, and effects of sin. Sin still exists in the form of the flesh, or the memory of your physical body, and sin is still a real possibility. Since we are positionally and judicially dead in our physical body, we can be justified unto eternal life and nothing done with the body can change that. Additionally, nothing we do for apparent “good” in the flesh is either acceptable to God nor counts for anything.

We have discussed previously how that the Law rests upon the power and performance of the flesh, and yet the flesh has no power of its own to display God’s righteousness; it in fact contains within it a Law as Paul will explain, one that is contrary and hostile to God, the Law of sin. How *could* God accept it? And how could God accept *us* as long as we were identified with that flesh? He couldn’t. It had to be judicially *put to death*.

Therefore, what purpose does the Law serve, if what we do in our flesh by the power of the flesh counts for nothing? As I've said before, God did not just deliver us from the Law and leave us to our own devices, but by uniting our inner man with Christ Himself, by marrying us to another man who is physically, eternally risen from the dead, has provided all the resources we need to live by that resurrection power.

Romans 7:4

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God...

In that I say *judicial*, that is to say it was by legal means before the court of God that this was accomplished on behalf of our justification, and this was accomplished by the physical death of Christ Himself, as we see here in Romans 7:4, that we have become *dead to the Law by the body of Christ*. His body took the penalty for the things done in ours.

Now it may occur to you that what we are speaking of is justification, largely the subject of Romans 1-5. As I've alluded to before, Romans 7 is an addendum to the doctrine of sanctification found in chapter 6; it is a further explanation in order to make sure we fully understand how our functional, sanctified life works, and that it is not according to the Law (or for the 21st century cultural Christian, *any* performance, works-based system). Romans 7 is almost a remedial course for us, to ensure we fully understand that our functional walk in Christ is grounded in positional truths, that is, in what Christ has done and freely given, not in our own works or effort.

When Christ died He condemned *sin* in the flesh—not sins, plural, but sin, singular, meaning the law of sin which has reigned by Adam unto death, Christ condemned in the flesh, that is, He carried out its death sentence. He stood in the place of Adam on the cross, for the sake of all of humanity who was “in Adam.” When your Adamic nature was put to death, your inner man, the woman, was married to another, *Christ*, who bodily rose from the dead. And if we are married to Him who rose from the dead, if we are one spirit with Him, then we too are flesh of His flesh and bone of bones.

There was a separation God made between your flesh and the law of sin it contains and your inner man. The union of our inner man with Christ here is likened to marriage, or two becoming one flesh. If the two have become *one flesh*, then you're a part of his body, and your flesh is his flesh, and his flesh is without sin. By now we should be seeing why we are called *the Body of Christ*, as everything He has given us is tied up in Christ Himself, spiritually and bodily.

Romans 7:5-6

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

The way we know the husband in the illustration of the woman and husband is the flesh is because in verse 5 it says, *For when we were in the flesh*. That word For is a word of logic connecting that whole illustration to the fact that Paul is referencing something in regards to the flesh.

Now it says here, when we were in the flesh, past tense. This is again speaking to that positional standing. We are no longer positionally in the flesh before God, else God would have wrath upon us. What we will learn however is that it is still possible for us to be functionally “in the flesh,” that is, to live after the flesh. But that will be dealt with later.

When we were in the flesh the motions of sins which were by the Law worked in us to bring forth fruit unto death. What this tells us is that the Law did not restrain sin, but actually stirred it up and put it into motion. There is something about the flesh, in its enmity towards God and His Law, that refuses to be subject. It is self willed and opposes authority. It's as dealing with a child; no matter how small or seemingly arbitrary the command, a child often wants to do the opposite. The flesh is no different. And this principle can only work death.

But now we are delivered from the Law itself, through a legal process involving the judicial death of our flesh, That is exactly what is meant here when it says, *That being dead wherein we were held*. We were held in bondage to the Law as long as God considered our physical bodies alive. Through the substitutionary work of Christ, He can now count them dead along with its deeds and the law of sin within it.

Now, to clarify, the flesh, or the “body of sin,” is not entirely synonymous with our physical body. The physical body is able to be brought under subjection to God by the Spirit of life in Christ, through faith. The body of sin, or the flesh, or the law of sin that is in our members, though

residing in the body, is a law unto itself within the body. Paul is going to later exhort us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God. Now of course this will not be accomplished by our own self will or effort, it will and it will not be accomplished by the works of the Law or any works based system of performance, but by faith and the power of God's word.

Thus it says in Romans 7:6, that we should serve in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter. It is a spiritual walk and work, not a fleshly one. The Law, resting on the performance of the flesh, has no ability to perfect us or allow us to serve God.

To conclude this lesson, let's follow the illustration of the woman and the husband through to its logical conclusion. If the first husband is dead, and we are married to another, then to try and serve God according to the first husband—*the flesh*—is likened to spiritual adultery, or even necromancy. The flesh is *dead*, and you are *married* to Christ. To attempt to serve God according to the Law is to attempt to serve God according to the flesh, and is to reject the provision God has made for us spiritually.