

Romans 7:1-6: Liberation by Death

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Preacher: Arthur Jackson

[0 : 00] You can find this on page 808 if you're using that Bible provided for you on the chair. Again, this is Romans chapter 7, verses 1 through 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?

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

[1 : 21] 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning.

Don't you just love the sounds of new and young life? Babies on the west side of Chicago.

And every now and then, the old folks get to come and hang out with you folks. It's good to be here, to be with you on this morning. And it's a joy to be able to speak from the Book of Romans.

We've been in this book since the beginning of the year. And it's been a good journey. I trust that you are learning and growing by reason of our study in the Book of Romans.

[2 : 28] We're doing it on the south side, and, of course, you're doing it here on the west side. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this opportunity this morning to speak to my brothers and sisters.

Pray, Lord, that your word would be alive in us and to us, and that we would grow because of it, that we would reach out, Lord, with opportunities that you give us.

And we commit our time to you this morning in Christ's name. Amen. Romans chapter 7 has been called one of the most famous chapters in the Bible.

That's quite a distinction when you think about all of the books of the Bible and all of the chapters in the books of the Bible. A famous chapter.

For those who have tried to unpack its teaching and come to a clear understanding and application of these 25 verses, it is as infamous as it is famous.

[3 : 40] To put it another way, the chapter is so famous because it is so notoriously difficult or challenging.

Those unfamiliar with the chapter may ask, well, Pastor, what's so difficult about 25 verses? I mean, after all, aren't there longer books or chapters in the Bible?

For sure. The main challenge that we find when we encounter these 25 verses, really, it extends primarily to verses 7 through 25.

And the questions go something like this. Does Paul speak autobiographically?

Is he talking about himself? If the I of the passage was Paul, was his experience before or after he became a Christian?

[4 : 48] If Paul was indeed a Christian, was his experience typical of other Christians?

Now, next week's preaching will deal with those questions, but the text that we have before us on this morning, verses 1 through 6, have some challenges of their own.

And our goal on this morning is to really understand what Paul is saying because these verses are somewhat a ramp on to the verses that will be dealt with on next week.

If you look at our text, it divides quite naturally. If you look in verse 1, you'll see that there is a principle that is stated.

In verses 2 and 3, the principle that Paul gives us in verse 1 is then illustrated. And in verses 4 through 6, the principle that is given in verse 1 and illustrated in verses 2 and 3, it is then applied.

[6 : 06] Keep those things in mind as we walk through the passage on today. The principle is given, it's stated, it's then illustrated, and then it is applied.

What comes into clear focus in these verses that are before us on this morning is the relationship of the Christian to the law, to the Torah.

Eight times in these six verses, you will notice that the word law is mentioned. If you look beyond this and you see the word, the words commandment or written code, and you will find that these words are appear 35 times in chapter 7, verse 1 through chapter 8, verse 4.

So really the focus becomes clear as far as what Paul is really talking about. It is a specific law focus that comes into view in Romans chapter 7.

Now up to this point, Paul has made some statements, and you may even describe them as eyebrow-raising statements regarding the law.

[7 : 26] You can see some of those. Chapter 3, verse 20. For by the works of the law, no human beings will be justified in his sight.

Verse 21. Now by the righteousness of God, the righteousness of God has been manifested, and here it is, apart from the law.

And although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. Notice what he says in chapter 5, verse 20. Now the law came in to increase trespass.

Oh, wow. So, Paul, what are you talking about? I mean, aren't you sort of giving the law a bad rap? And then look what he says in chapter 6, verses 14 and 15.

For sin will have no dominion over you. And here it is. For you are not under law, but under grace.

[8 : 32] What then are we to sin? Because we are not under law. He emphasizes it again, but under grace. So, Paul, what are you doing?

What are you doing? Are you taking liberty with? Are you anti-law in your understanding, in your preaching? Here Paul addresses the matters of the law in chapter 7 more specifically.

And if you have an ESV Bible, notice the header that is there. Released from the law. Paul, in these verses, verses 1 through 6.

And I think that is a very appropriate, a fitting title for what we see here. Paul's teaching is designed to help believers back then as well as now to see that life in Christ means liberty from the law.

Life in Christ means liberty from the law. The guide for Christian living and maturity is no longer conformity to a written external legal code.

[9 : 51] Christians are now, through the ministry of God's spirit, within, we are now willing slaves of grace.

Willing slaves of grace. We are willing slaves of grace.

So, we come to verse 1 and we notice the principle is stated. Or do you not know, brothers? For I'm speaking to those who know the law.

That the law is binding on a person as long as he, and might I add, she, lives. So, while the Christians in Rome, and there were Jew and Gentile, majority Gentile, but included a Jewish contingent that was there, they would be familiar with the principles of law in general, more likely the reference to the law in verse 1 here, and mostly throughout, is to the law of Moses.

That was a major section of the Bible that they were using in that particular day. And the principle otherwise stated is this, law is for the living.

[11 : 16] Huh? The law has dominion over a people as long as they are alive. We understand that, don't we? When's the last time you went to the cemetery?

The laws of living do not apply. Eat, rest, drink, you can throw them out the window. The dead don't need them.

The word, notice in the text, the law is binding. That translates the same word that is translated in chapter 6, verse 9, as dominion.

Look there with me. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion, rule, mastery, over him.

And look at chapter 6, verse 14. For sin will have no, and there's the word, no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.

[12 : 24] Here, what is being referred to for the law is binding or has dominion over a person or mastery over a person as long as he lives.

The dominion of the law, another way of saying it, it ends when there is a death. death ends one's relationship with the law.

So, that's the principle. Having stated the principle that death terminates a binding legal relationship, Paul illustrates the same in the context of the marriage relationship.

The death of a spouse releases the living spouse and here, a woman from the legal relationship that is the marriage. So, Paul takes marriage and he illustrates the point that he's trying to get across.

It illustrates it perfectly. It's a legal covenantal relationship between a man and a woman. and here, a married woman is under the authority of her husband and she is legally bound to him as long as he is alive.

[13 : 44] Notice the phrases that we see there. The woman is bound by law to her husband. Notice, while he lives, but if her husband dies, and notice the word, she is released from the law.

So, bound by law when living, released from the law at death. The dead husband has no authority over a living wife.

So, he presses, in verse 3, he presses the point home using two different scenarios and here's what we have here. If a married woman takes up with another person while her husband is alive, guess what?

she will be called an adulteress because she dishonors the marriage covenant and is labeled accordingly. But, here's the deal, if, if her husband dies, the woman marries another person, she is not an adulteress because the death of the husband frees her from the marriage covenant.

That's the point. So, a corresponding release, the legal relationship is enforced until death.

[15 : 05] Now, Paul, he uses this wonderful illustration, but in the process, it really calls to mind some features about marriage according to God's word.

It's male, female. The permanency of marriage comes into focus also, doesn't it? It is until death parts. Unfortunately, all too many marriages end before they get to this particular point.

And, we're living in a different day where marriage is really not upheld and honored. To many in our day, it is too often a throwaway kind of institution.

information and some statistics really help us to see how people feel about marriage. And, I really want to say this to you. I want to say this to this group.

Many of you are not married yet. What's your perspective on this side of marriage going into it? It is estimated that roughly 30 to 60 percent of all married individuals will engage in infidelity at some point during their marriage.

[16 : 23] that is high. That gives you an idea of how people view marriage. And, the resource says, and these are probably on the conservative side.

And, here's a statistic particularly for you. Infidelity is becoming more common among people under 30. How many here are under 30?

the majority. Now, I'm twice 30 plus. But, of the grace of God, I've been married over 30 years.

Men, brothers, are more likely to cheat than women. But, as women become more financially independent, women are starting to act more like men with respect to infidelity.

As more and more women enter the workforce, office romances are becoming more common. Spouses often spend more time with coworkers than with each other.

[17 : 39] And, that's true. Here's one for this crowd. The internet, email, and chat rooms are making it easier for people to engage in infidelity. Beware.

What's my point? Those of you who are married, protect your marriage. Those of you who are not married, sharpen your perspective on marriage.

Don't wreck your marriage. Again, Paul uses this as a little, his point is bigger than that, but I thought that's an appropriate place to say a word about our need to honor marriage as a God-given institution.

The principle is stated, the law is for the living. The principle is illustrated, when death occurs in marriage, the remaining spouse is no longer bound by the laws of that marriage.

Marriage can take place without penalty or without label that of an adulteress. and so look at verses five and six.

[18 : 49] The principle is applied and here's the idea. Because of their union with Christ in his death, Christians are no longer under the rule or under the dominion of law.

So Paul moves in verse four from illustration to application and he speaks to all of those in the Christian family. Notice what he says. 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.

I love this particular verse. It is theologically loaded and the centrality of the person and the work of Christ come to view here, come to view, come into focus, speaking about his death and his resurrection.

And as we think about this verse, it sort of reverts our mind to Romans chapter six, which we heard a few weeks ago, particularly verses three and four. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death. And again, once you speak of the tenses really say it all here because it speaks about a once and for all something that act that has happened.

- [20 : 23] So, likewise, Paul says, or accordingly, likewise, my brothers, you also have died again. The death has taken place.

And really, as we look on down, the verb is actually a passive verb and the rendering here is not necessarily the best. Probably a better way of looking at it is this.

You were put to death. You were executed, actually with Christ. The point is that a death has occurred. And the believer's death, your death and my death, is because of our union.

it is through the physical bodily death of Jesus Christ in his crucifixion. But also the new relationship is also with Christ.

We died with Christ and our life today is with and through and by and in Jesus Christ himself. The death of the believer through the death of Christ is a death to the law.

- [21 : 27] And that means deliverance from its binding authority. That's Paul's point. The result of our union with Christ is one way to look at it.

It's at the last part of the verse the marriage metaphor continues. What happens? In order that we may bear fruit for God.

What is the result of our union with Christ? Paul picks up on the fruit bearing dimensions and the purposes of union with Christ. Freedom from the old, the law, union with Christ means that you and I as believers we can bear fruit for God.

So what does fruit mean? It can mean godly character or deeds that are consistent with our union and check this out with the one who has been raised from the dead.

Not just anyone. Our union is with the risen Christ and we should certainly bear a likeness to the one that we are in union with.

- [22 : 41] And I notice we have a lot of children around here. Have you ever looked at that child and you sort of see yourself in the face of that child or see yourself in the features of that child.

That child may have your nose or your eyes or your lips. Again but you bear a likeness to the one that came from you or that one that comes from you.

Christians should look like Jesus. We should look like him in the effects and in our lives we should bear a likeness to him.

I had a talk with one of my sons on the other day. Basically I told him it's not just enough that you look like me physically.

I want you to bear my likeness in more than just our features and even so we as the people of God should bear witness to bear likeness with the one that we are in union with.

- [23 : 59] Another way to look at the fruit for God is converts for God by reason of our work for Christ and this certainly fits the context in Rome because you may recall that Paul was on a mission in writing to the church at Rome and he had a missionary journey we don't particularly see that in the book of Acts but what he had in mind that he was going west he had he had preached and proclaimed out in the eastern area but he wanted to go to Rome and so several kind of gospel fruits are possible here it could be the fruit of convert could be the fruit of character but nonetheless each of it all of it is fruit for God the union of the believer with Jesus Christ is a fruit bearing!

union and you and I should long for that we should pray for that as a matter of fact on tomorrow we have our first Monday prayer and this is a time that set aside church wide for fasting and prayer and seeking God for his work in and through us as a church and our outreach in the neighborhood whether it's west south downtown or north side our outreach in Chicago might be fruitful and regardless of the kind of fruit our relationship with the Lord Jesus must not be characterized by infertility that we are not producing whether it is Christian character or Christian converts and if that is the case if we are infertile guess what it's not Jesus fault we have to look somewhere else for fault and blame is we or if we are not bearing

Christian character or if they're not Christian converts because of our union is with the resurrected Christ verse four again looking at the tenses there it's looking at something that has been done it is a pass or a tense that is in view that's there but he transitions into verse five and he really looks at what happened before Christ that resulted in fruit for death and it's a contrast it concerns the before Christ condition of believers for while we were living in the flesh before Christ our sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our members and what was the result to bear fruit for death what characterized the season and before

Christ this last week I recognized my 47th I believe it was spiritual birthday March 29th 1964 some of your parents weren't even born then maybe I came to Christ and there was a before Christ and even in my 15 years of before Christ I was bearing fruit unto death it just sort of automatically comes by reason of our union with Adam our sinful natures it will happen you recognize what your life was before you came to Christ huh it's characterized we were in the flesh while we were in the flesh and the reference there is to our old sinful nature which is a part of our inheritance from

Adam huh being in the flesh is equal to being unsaved and certain things characterized us before our before Christ condition it was not only a time of living in the flesh it was a time of living for the flesh time when sinful passions were at work in our bodies and rather than fruit being worthy a worthy offering to God our fruit bearing was for death think of that which is unhealthy think of that which is poisonous think of that which is deadly think of that which is monstrous look at chapter 6 verses 20 and 21 it really offers a bit of commentary on the verse that's before when you were slaves of sin you were free in regard to righteousness but what fruit were you getting at the time from the things in which you are now ashamed that's some things in the past that you are ashamed of

[29 : 04] I do things that I sometimes shudder and sometimes am humbled that God rescued me from all a lot that could have been had I stayed on the trajectory that I was on as a teenager where would I be today I don't know but the end of those things Paul says is death for the Christian those things are past and furthermore as it relates to the law such anti God passions because that is exactly what they were in some strange way and we'll look more at this on in the next message in some strange way those anti God passions were not necessarily checked by the law they were aroused by the law through the agency of the law and again it next week

Paul introduces this here but he really deals with it in the verses that follow because in some strange way there's these strange dynamics that happen between sin and the law but such is the pre Christ description of the believer check it out in the flesh controlled by sinful passions bearing fruit for death that's what it is that characterizes those who are outside of Christ but notice look at verse 6 so don't you love it but now we are released from the law Paul what's the Christian's relationship with the law he's sort of leading up to these and he's he's crescendoing in chapter 7 we've looked at those things briefly chapter 3 chapter 5 and in other places but what's the relationship released from the law the present life of the Christian you see it but now we are released verse 5 looking back what about now but now we are released from the old order and that's his idea the old order and we have been incorporated into the new order you notice that the old order was one of captivity you died having died to that which held us captivity our death in

Christ is a death to that which suppressed held us down same word that's used in chapter 1 verse 18 the conclusion is that the purpose of release from the law is for a new kind of service even servitude that's the idea behind the word so that we serve another way of putting is we serve as slaves the old order was based on a written code the new order based on Christ triumph over sin and death based on his work and then the descent of the Holy Spirit to indwell the believer is also in view Oscar read Jeremiah chapter 31 but that very passage could have been on Paul's mind that speaks of the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel in those days I will put my law within them and

I will write it on their hearts that's what's being fulfilled or been fulfilled that is what Paul is proclaiming and he says I will be their God and they shall be my people no longer shall each one teach his neighbor each his brother saying know the Lord for they shall know me from the least to the greatest declares the Lord and I will forgive their iniquity and remember there's that day is now released for a different kind servitude what are the implications of all of this for you and me today those who are far removed from the mixed congregations in Rome who were challenged by their acceptance of one another based on their perceptions of the law Paul again deals more specifically with the matters the particulars of that Romans chapter 14 that comes into view about these observances and where they are not to put one another down for observances or lack observances of the different codes that were there but here's what was happening the ghost of the law haunted the church in

Paul's day and there were teachers and advocates of the law who were unwilling to lay their arms down and even today the ghost of religious servitude has a way of trumping the grace of God and friends these things should never be you and I must shed any and all faulty religious incomplete teachings of our past because they can haunt us and keep us bound and keep us in bondage Paul's teaching here has the power to nip religious sentimentality in the bud we are released from our captivity to old things religious old things are otherwise old things in our union with Christ we are released from those things our union with Christ means separation from whatever it was that has held us captive

[34 : 54] I don't know what your past includes oh but I want you to focus more on your union with Jesus than whatever it was that may have had you captive our relationship is with the one who has been raised from the dead and whatever we were married to in the past it's over you can take off the old ring you can pack and put the clothes away because it's done it's over and so this brings us back to verse four to the death and resurrection of Jesus his death was the death of all who put their trust in him he is the one who has fulfilled the law's demands and therefore the focus and preoccupation of the believer is no longer on the law it's on Christ who fulfilled the law the spirit has descended and resides in the hearts of those who believe he'll speak wonderfully about that in

Romans chapter eight how do he's resident and we cry out on the basis of that relationship Abba father his death has meant the inauguration friends of a new day a new age today is the day of the spirit of God the age of the spirit and this means friends that you and I walk in resurrection power those who serve Christ in the power of the spirit fulfill!

love love him we serve him we are presently under his lordship his mastery we are debtors to the grace of God and we worship and we live accordingly oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be let thy goodness like a fetter bind my wondering heart to thee prone to wonder lord I feel it prone to leave the God of love here's my heart oh take and seal it I'm yours lord seal it for your courts above so here this morning we come to the table and as you do so brothers and sisters

I want you to be keenly aware of our death to the law through the death of Christ represented through these emblems on today his death was indeed our death and friends you and I we belong to him and we belong to him alone the one who has been raised from death the one who has power to strengthen us power to keep us and may we be strengthened today through him father we praise you for your goodness to us and our release from the old our union with the new our entry into a new day a day of the spirit a new realm and we bless and we honor you for may that which held us captive oh

God may we recognize that in Christ we've triumphed over it the old has gone the new has come and we're secure in him amen him