

• *We have died to sin and are also released from the law*

• *The law only has authority over the person while he is alive*

• *Illustrated by the marriage law*

• *Freedom to remarry after the other partner dies*

• *The Christian similarly dies to the law!*

The way of holiness is to be under Jesus himself!

• *Christians have died to the law in all its aspects*

• *Through union with Christ*

• *United to the risen, ascended and enthroned Lord Jesus Christ*

The comparison: Flesh and law v. Spirit

In chapter 6 of Romans Paul told us we have died to sin. Now Paul says: we are released from the Mosaic law, from everything that was specially characteristic of the covenant of law between God and Israel through Moses. The chapter starts like this. ¹*Do you not know, brothers and sisters – for I am speaking to people who know the law – that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?* The law only operates when the person concerned is alive. Imagine someone commits a crime, and the legal authorities are wanting him for prosecution and possible imprisonment. But then the police or magistrates discover that that person has died. At that point the magistrates are no longer interested in summoning the man to court. The law only has authority over the person while he is alive.

Now the law never dies but the Christian dies to the law! He says, ²*For a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage.* ³*So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.* In verses 2–3 he puts forward something that is both an example and an illustration at the same time. It is a good example of what he has just said. The marriage-law ceases to have legal power once the married person dies. The other person is free to marry again.

But this principle is also an illustration. The Christian is married to the law. If he or she dies he is released from the law. The law does not die but the Christian dies to the law, and then comes alive again in Christ but not back to the old relationship!

The heart of what Paul says is in verse 4. *So, my brothers, you also were made to die to the law through the body of Christ . . .* It is a very radical statement. The Christians at Rome were married to the law. The law ruled over them like a tyrannical husband. But God's law is not the way of holiness. The way of holiness is to be under a Person, Jesus himself! All Christians have died to the law, to its restraining aspect, its punishments, its rituals, its animal-sacrifices, its rules about holy days, its requirement that our king be a Jew, its tribal laws (Levi, Judah!), its economic aspects, its agricultural rules. *So, my brothers, you also were made to die to the law through the body of Christ that you might belong to another . . .* The law of God cannot die. But the Christian has died! He has died in Christ as Paul explained so thoroughly in Romans chapter 6. This leaves the Christian free to pursue an entirely different kind of relationship. If you want to live a truly godly life, do not cultivate a relationship with the Mosaic law, cultivate a relationship directly with Jesus. This dying to the law takes place through union with Christ 'in his body upon the cross'. Paul says in effect: 'You also died to the law through the body of Christ which upon the cross bore our sins and earned the judgement of the law'.

The Christian is united to Christ; Christ is risen from the dead; so I am risen from the dead in Christ. I am 'married' to the risen and ascended and enthroned Lord Jesus Christ. *So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God.*

In Romans 7:5–6 he compares what it is like to be 'in the flesh' and 'under the law' (on the one side) with being 'in the Spirit' (on the other side). The result of being under law¹ is agony and spiritual death. Verse

5 is the key to the rest of the chapter. In verse 6 he puts the other side of the comparison and tells us what it is like to be in the Spirit and 'married' to Jesus. ⁵*For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.* ⁶*But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

The differences:

- (i) Flesh or Spirit*
- (ii) Past or present*
- (iii) Aroused or released*
- (iv) Fruit for death or God*
- (v) Oldness or newness*

Consider the differences between the old life and the new life. (i) One was 'in the flesh'; the other is 'in the newness of the Spirit'. (ii) One was the past unregenerate life ('we were'); the other is the present life of the Christian ('But now . . .'). (iii) In one it was a case of 'sinful passions aroused by the law . . . at work in our bodies . . .'; in the other situation we are 'released from the law . . .'. (iv) In the one case it is 'fruit for death'; in the other (as Paul has told us before) it is 'fruit for God'¹. (v) In one it is 'oldness'; in the other it is 'newness'.

1 7:4

Verse 5 is referring to the unconverted time of life. People who think they can relate to God by way of law are actually trusting the flesh, the sinful nature. The Mosaic law did not help Paul in these unconverted days; it inflamed sin in him, and in others like him. Paul says, 'when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies . . .' Men and women have 'sinful desires'. This refers to our natural appetites, but they get out of hand and become excessive. They rule us. We are not controlled by our intelligence; we are controlled by what we **want** – our desires ruling our mind and our decisions. These desires of ours which get out of control and become sinful get 'aroused by the law'. **Any** kind of law actually arouses our sinfulness. One might think that law controls sin. It may do so if the threat of punishment is great! But at the same time as law may or may not curb sin, it actually increases the desire for sin.

This sin is aroused and inflamed in our 'members', the parts of our bodies. This includes our brain, our sexuality, our desires for comfort, our imaginations, every part of our physical make-up. So life under the law produces death. The end of the whole procedure is the God-less-ness which is death.

Thank God for verse 6. Paul is able to go on to say 'But now . . .!' When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he or she is taken out of this realm of sin and judgement and law altogether, and is given the Holy Spirit. It is an entirely new realm, a realm 'in Christ' and under grace. Where sin once abounded now grace abounds all the more. The Christian is to get hold of the fact. He has died to the law; he is in the Spirit for ever.

• Verse 5 refers to the unconverted time of life

• Law increases the desire for sin

• Every part of our physical make-up

• But in Jesus is an entirely new realm under grace



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