

FREE FROM THE LAW (Romans 7:1-6)

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most burdensome views of the Christians life is the view that our relationship with God is a ‘Performance Based’ relationship. That is, it is based on keeping rules. We must do something to get God to love us and to keep God loving us. Another way of putting the problem is to have a ‘legalistic view’ of the Christian life. This was especially a problem for the early believers who were mainly Jews. Paul deals with this problem in Romans 7:1-6. He opens this paragraph in verse 1 by speaking to those who know the law. He writes:

(Rom 7:1-6 NKJV) Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

Paul asks, “Do you not know that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?” He is talking about God’s law. God’s law is binding. It has always been binding. We cannot escape the obligation or sanctions of the law because God hasn’t changed his mind about his ethical standard for us. The 10 Commandments are 10 Commandments, not 10 Suggestions. They are as relevant today as they were when they were written down by Moses. We all have a binding relationship with God’s law because God’s law is God’s law!

But we have a big problem. We cannot keep the law perfectly. Therefore our most serious problem is that the law condemns us. The law says that we are guilty before God. What can we do? We can’t do anything, but in God has solved the problem in Jesus. This is what this section of Romans is all about. How God makes us free from the law.

THE MARRIAGE ILLUSTRATION

To teach us how God delivers us from the law Paul uses an illustration. It is the illustration of the marriage relationship within the Jewish culture. Verses 2-3:

2} For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. {3} So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Now this verse is not the definitive verse on marriage or divorce. In fact divorce is not in the picture. The picture is that as long a man and a woman are married and are living, the woman just can't go out and marriage another man. This would be committing adultery.. She is bound by the law to her husband. But if the husband dies, then she is free from the law that binds her to that husband. She is free to marry another without committing adultery.

Paul is using this illustration to show that as long as we are still bound by the law of God as sinners, as guilty, as condemned, the only way to get released from that law is through death. Either the law has to die or we do. Well the law doesn't die. It is still operative. But we died. When? And How? We died in Jesus when Jesus died on the cross. This is another application of our union with Christ. Paul had already expounded on this in chapter 6. We were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. When? When Jesus died and rose again. We share in Christ's death and resurrection because God sees us in Christ. Jesus is our substitute and our representative. This has great implications for us today. We are dead to the law, not in an inward deadness sense but in the way that God sees us in Christ. Just like we are dead to sin, not as an inward deadness, but as a relationship in God's mind, we have died to the law.

MARRIED TO ANOTHER

What does this mean in practice? Paul tells us in verse 4:

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

We have become dead to the law that we may be married to another. Who is that 'another?' It is Him who was raised from the dead, i.e. Jesus. We have a new relationship now that controls us, guides us, strengthens us, defines us. We have a living relationship with Jesus, the Son of God. This is the picture of the true Christian life. The essence of the Christian life is not keeping God's law, or rules, or things like that. The essence is a relationship with Christ, a living fellowship with the living Christ. I love that verse in I Cor. 1:9 that says:

(1 Cor 1:9 NKJV) God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have been called into the fellowship of His Son. We have a new husband. He is the new husband I say "I Do" to!

THE END RESULTS OF THE NEW MARRIAGE

What is the end result of this new relationship? Fruit. Fruit to God. This is the message of John 15.

(John 15:5 NKJV) "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Verses 5-6 contrasts the fruit of being married to the law and fruit of being married to Christ in a the new living relationship:

{5} For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

{6} But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

In the flesh, i.e. in our old unsaved relationship to the law all the fruit we could bear leads to death. But God has put us in a new relationship with Christ which now we serve God in the Spirit. We don't serve God in the 'oldness of the letter' but in the newness of the Spirit. God's wants, not just our outward conformity to his will. He wants us to serve in the newness of the Spirit that we might bear the fruit of the Spirit! He even create in us a new heart, inward passion, and personal devotion. He creates this new heart, this inner passion, and this personal devotion through His Spirit making real to us our new relationship with Christ.

We have been freed from the law, i.e. free from serving God by the letter of the law in order to serve God in the newness of the Spirit. What a wonderful view of the Christian life. Not only is it wonderful it is the only view that will produce fruit to the glory of God.

“Free from the Law” is one of our hymns we sing.

Free from the law, O happy condition,
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

CLARIFYING WHAT WE ARE FREE FROM IN THE LAW

We need to be clear on what we are free from. Some of my Reformed friends do not like this hymn, because they think we are singing:

Free from the law, O happy condition,
I keep on sinning and still get remission
Free from the law, I don't have to obey it
Grace hath redeemed me, let's live freely.

This is this certainly not what Paul is talking about. In the next section he will emphasize that the law is good and holy also. In chapter 6 he has emphasized that we are not to continue in sin because we are under grace. What then does he mean that we are free from the law?

Let's explore this idea further. What exactly are we free from?

FREE FROM THE DEBT, CURSE, CONDEMNATION OF THE LAW.

First being free from the law means that we are free from the debt, the curse, and the condemnation of the law.

The law gets us in its debt through our failure to live up to its requirements. A law has at least two parts, if it is to be a law: It has a stipulation or requirement and then it has the penalty or sanction for failing to carry out the directive. God's laws says to do this and that the penalty for not doing this or that is death. It condemns those who fail to keep the law. We all fall short of fulfilling the requirements of the law and are thereby condemned by the law. As Galatians puts it as the curse of the law:

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." (3:10-11)

If you failed in keeping the law perfectly you are still in debt to the law. We owe the law something and that something is the penalty for violating it. But someone has come along and has paid our debt to the law. That someone is Jesus Christ. Now we are free from the debt of the law through Jesus Christ. Are you interested in that offer? Sure you are.

Winston Churchill paid a great tribute to the young men in the Royal Air Force who guarded England during the war saying, "Never in the history of mankind have so many owed so much to so few."

When we think of the cross of Christ, we can say, "Never in the history of the universe has mankind owed so much to One."

We have been freed from the debt of the law by being released from the condemnation of the law. "There is therefore, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

FREE FROM SIN'S USE OF THE LAW

Another part of being free from the law is that we are free from sin's use of the law in our lives. This is the thought of 6:5:

For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

Somehow the law excites sin within us. Have you ever experienced the urge to walk on the grass when you see a sign that says, "Don't walk on the grass"? This may be a small insight into how the law excites sin within to express itself. There is something within that gets riled up when the law is laid down to it.

If we do not become free from this attitude, we will be in bondage to it. The only way to overcome sin exciting us to more sin is to be connected to Christ, our living Savior.

FREE FROM DEFECTIVE VIEWS OF THE LAW

Another aspect of being free from the law is that we are free from defective views of the purpose of the law. The Jews has a defective view of the law in that they saw it as a way of establishing righteousness with God. In speaking of the Jews in 10:3 Paul writes:

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

The OT law was never given to bring us life. It was given to bring us to Christ. Christ is the end of the law in this function. Romans 10:4:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Christ is the only one who brings us to God, not the law.

A professor was touring the Holy Land with a bus-load of students. One day he was lecturing on the text of the Good Shepherd, and he pointed

out that in Palestine the shepherds lead the sheep rather than going behind them and driving them as they do in most other parts of the world.

Just as he was emphatically making this point, the bus stopped to let a flock of sheep cross the road. To everyone's surprise, there was a man with a whip, driving them from behind.

The students snickered and looked questioningly at their professor. Obviously disturbed and embarrassed, the professor jumped from the bus and called out to the man driving the sheep. "My friend, I have always been told that shepherds in Palestine lead their sheep. They do not drive them as you are doing."

The old man driving the sheep with a whip called back, "You are absolutely right; but you see, I am not the shepherd -- I am the village butcher."

If we look to the law to bring us to God, we will be greatly disappointed. It will be the butcher. It will bring us to death, for it is what condemns us. Christ is the only One who brings us to God.

We are free from wrong views of the law which puts us on a performance based or legalistic relationship with God.

CONCLUSION

Free from the law, O happy condition,
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

Yes we are free from the curse and condemnation of the law because Jesus has taken that curse for us. Yes, we are free from sin's use of the law to excite us to more sin because we have a living, intimate relationship to the One who has kept the law for us. Yes, we are free from the view that our relationship with God is based on our performance, i.e. on our ability to keep the law. Jesus has freed us from that and now we are married to another. Our relationship with God is based on an intimate relationship with His Son.

You are free from the law. What are you to do?

- Believe it and claim it.
- Say "I Do" to your new spouse
- Focus on bearing the fruit of the Spirit to the glory of God

Amen? Amen!