

ROMANS (7:1-6)

Legally Separated

PART 24 – JANUARY 23, 2005

PAUL'S POINT

- Chapter six is about *dying* to sin and *freedom* from sin.
- In seven, we are to die to, and be freed from: the Law.

To make this new point, Paul replaces his analogy of a slave and a master, to that of a husband and a wife ... make your own joke! Remember in Romans 6:15 when Paul said:

... you are not under law, but under grace. – Romans 6:14 NIV

Q: Do you know what this “Law” is, that Paul keeps referring to?

A: It's the revealed will of God in the form of do's and don'ts.

Paul's listeners (especially the Jews) have got to be wondering how/why freedom from God's Law won't produce *lawlessness*. Yet Paul insists that “dying” to the Law produces practical righteousness, and love, and service to the glory of God. And in today's verses (7:1-6) he substantiates his claim.

Do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to men who know the law – that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 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. 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. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. 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. – Romans 7:1-6 NIV

MARRIED TO THE LAW

Notice that Paul begins this section with a “plug” for the Jews.

Do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to men who know the law ... - Romans 7:1a NIV

Q: Why would Paul segregate the Jews from the Gentiles here?

- A. The Jews more fully comprehend and appreciate the burden, the weight, and the load that come with keeping the Law.
- B. They're an unappreciated minority (returning from exile). Paul is reminding the Romans to respect their "brothers".

... that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? - Romans 7:1b NIV

Imagine a fatal car accident. If the man at fault was dead, it would be very weird for the police to write him a ticket! Paul makes this point with an analogy of a married couple:

For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 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. - Romans 7:2-3 NIV

- Paul is *not* commenting on divorce, remarriage, or adultery.
- He's commenting on the *Law*, and using an example of *bigamy*.

The first couple is *not* divorced. So, "**If she marries another**" while her "**husband**" (not "ex") is alive, she breaks the Law.

- Paul's point is this: we are either married to the Law or the Lord.

Q: Do you know what it means to be "married" to the Law?

Try to imagine being married to someone who's never wrong, is extremely picky, and demands absolute perfection. Every morning they give you an overwhelming to-do list. Every evening they review your day, and point out all of your mistakes and shortcomings and failures.

You know the old joke: "I'd never consider divorce ... murder yes!" Well, if you're going to separate from the Law someone's gotta die.

CHRISTMAS BALLS AND CRANBERRIES

And it ain't the Law ... it's you!

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**. - Romans 7:4 NIV

God's law didn't die (or pass away); the rules of righteousness are very much alive, but our relationship to them has changed.

Q: How come dying to the Law doesn't produce *lawless* people?

A: The only way we can die *to* the Law is to die *with* Christ.

- You die to the Law so "that you might belong to [Christ]"
- You belong to Christ so "that we might bear fruit to God"

Q: What kind of "fruit" are we expected to bear?

... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. – Galatians 5:22-23 NIV

- This stuff sounds a lot like ... the revealed will of God!

Q: So, why would we die to the very fruit we're supposed to bear?

A: Because God's law is only fulfilled through Christ-loving, not rule-keeping.

So we must break up with the demanding spouse who points out our flaws (but won't lift a finger to help us improve) and be joined to the One who puts our needs first, and loves away our faults.

It's like Christmas balls and cranberries. Both are good things that serve a purpose), it's just that Christmas balls can only decorate the *exterior*, while cranberries demonstrate the *interior*.

Jesus' main criticism of many Pharisees was that their faith was mostly artificial adornment (glitz & glitter) instead of growth. The Lord will always choose and cherish tiny buds of genuine spiritual growth over full-blooming plastic ornamentation.

Just as the goal of marriage isn't the vows, Jesus didn't come to lead us to the Law; the Law was given to lead us to Christ.

- The Law is not the goal ... the Savior is. To live is Christ!

THE NEW WAY

There's one other big difference between Christmas balls and cranberries: one is living and the other is dead.

For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. – Romans 7:5 NIV

The Law looks only at actions, and is powerless to improve them. Therefore, the fruit of the Law is frustration and condemnation. Contrast that to the "produce" of the Comforter. One is fruit for life; one is "fruit for death".

No one can be a productive, fruit-bearing follower as long as their faith is based and built on rules and regulations.

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. - Romans 7:6 NIV

By sharing in Christ's death, we also share in His Spirit. This causes us to serve God in a completely new way:

A woman is married to a demanding, perfectionist. She cooks and cleans but it's never enough to please him. And she resents him for it. Then, one day he dies (let's say a piano falls on him!) Now, the woman remarries; this time to a loving, caring man who treasures her. She does the same things for him that she did for the former husband: she cooks and she cleans.

Q: But what is it that's changed?

A: Her attitude and his approval.

She now gladly serves out of love, gratitude, admiration, and appreciation – not fear, guilt, or obligation.

- She **“serves in the new way of the Spirit”!**

The OT prophet Ezekiel spoke these words on behalf of the Lord:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. – Ezekiel 36:26-27 NIV

This has come to pass through Christ! When we “die” with him (receive him as savior), his Spirit indwells us and alters our relationship with the *written code*. It's no longer inscribed on stone tablets and scrolls; but it's now written on our hearts and we're *moved* to follow.

- Not an external demand, but an internal desire.

And as this desire grows (like fruit) from an all-satisfying relationship with a loving Savior, righteousness grows too. And this is Paul's answer as to why being *free* from the Law produces love instead of lawlessness.

- The “old way of the written code” is from the outside in.
- The “new way of the Spirit” is from the inside out.

Q: Have you been released from receiving God's acceptance based on your performance; or, are you still married to the Law?