

Freedom from the Law

Romans 7:1 - 13

¹Do 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? ²For 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. ³So 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. ⁴So, 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. ⁵For 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. ⁶But 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. ⁷What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." ⁸But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. ⁹Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹²So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

In Paul's day a battle raged between Christians concerning the Old Testament law and the role of the law in the Christian's life. In the midst of this battle, there were two equally dangerous and equally polarizing extremes. On the one hand, some dismissed the law altogether and argued that grace had replaced the law. A person could do anything he or she pleased and simply rely up and turn to the grace of God. One could cede control of his or her life to natural desires and wishes and, if they led to sin, simply turn to God's grace out of necessity and convenience.

The other extreme insisted on a strict and rigid adherence to the law in all matters of life. A person's relationship to God was reduced to rule-knowing and rule-keeping. In turn, that person would measure his spiritual acumen and maturity by his ability to keep the law. There was little, if any, room for grace, love and relationship. Faith was replaced by duty.

Paul was often challenged by both extremes. In today's Bible lesson, Paul argued the Christian was under the control and ownership of a new Master -

Christ Himself. We are not slaves to the law or to sin. We are slaves to Christ so that we might produce fruit that honors Him (see verse 4).

Paul also offered some observations about the value of the law...

- 1. The law made him (and us) aware of God's ways and what God calls sin.**
- 2. The law created a clear contrast between sin and righteousness.**
- 3. The law of God is one...to break one command or law is to break the whole law itself.**

Paul realized that it was impossible to keep the whole law of God. And to break one single or small part of the law was to be guilty of breaking it all. Though the law was considered good, it was not capable of bringing life, forgiveness or grace to anyone. We are now dead to the law as a measurement of righteousness. We rely upon the righteousness of Christ alone and plead His merits in our behalf.

Verse 6 is a pivotal verse. We relate to God in a new way. We serve God in a new way. Our relationship and service are now anchored and grounded in Christ and Him alone. If we have died to something, the law for example, it no longer has authority over us. Law is binding only on the living. We do not just callously disregard the law of God, but neither do we find our worth and righteousness in it. Just as when a person's spouse dies, that person is no longer married. So too, in Christ, we have died to the law and to sin. Neither should have dominion or authority over us any longer. We are dead to such things.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives encourages and inspires us to seek to please Him in our living. John MacArthur has written that *"as believers, we are dead to the law as far as its demands and condemnation are concerned, but because we now live in newness of the Spirit, we love and serve God with a full and joyous heart. And we know that to obey God is to do His will and that to do His will is to give Him glory."*

Applications . . .

- 1. Consider whether your life is controlled by anything other than Christ. Rid your life of that control now.**
- 2. Consider the things you "died to" when you came to Christ. How did God help to give you victory over such things?**
- 3. Seek five ways this week that you can intentionally bring glory to God. What five things could you say or do?**

- 4. Take five minutes now to give thanks for your salvation.**
- 5. After spending five minutes giving thanks to God, simply sit in silence before God. Let your silence be an act of commitment to Him as you renew your faith in Christ.**