

THE EPISTLES TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
3. Justification: the position of righteousness from God (3:21-5:21)
4. Sanctification: from position to practice (6:1-8:39)
 - a. Concerning Sin (6:1-23)
 - 1) Start living the way God sees you (6:1-14)
 - 2) Freed to serve (6:15-23)
 - b. Concerning the Law (7:1-25)
 - 1) Christians' relationship to the Law (1-6)
 - 2) The Law's relationship to sin (7-12)
 - 3) Christians' relationship to sin (13-25)

B. Comments on Romans 7

1. Tom Constable, *Paul needed to explain the believer's relationship to the Law because of people's natural tendency to view law as a means of making progress. The apostle had already shown that the Law has no value in justification (3:20). Now he spoke of it in relation to progressive sanctification. If believers are not under the Mosaic Law (6:14), what is our relationship to it?*
2. Warren Wiersbe, *Something in human nature makes us want to go to extremes, a weakness from which Christians are not wholly free. 'Since we are saved by grace,' some argue, 'we are free to live as we please,' which is the extreme of license. 'But we cannot ignore God's Law,' others argue. 'We are saved by grace, to be sure; but we must live under Law if we are to please God.' This is the extreme expression of legalism. Paul answered the first group in Romans 6; the second group he answered in Romans 7.*

ROMANS 7:1-6, CHRISTIANS' RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW

A. Paul gives a principle concerning the relationship of a person to the Law (1-3)

1. One is bound to the law only while alive (1), *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?*
 - a. *Or do you not know, brothers*
 - 1) Paul used this expression in Romans 6:3, *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*
 - 2) *Or* appears to continue his instruction on the importance of a Christian's baptism into Christ's death. Now, he declares that baptism in Christ's death results in freedom from enslavement to the law.
 - 3) This section is an expansion of his concept in Romans 6:14, *For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*
 - 4) A better translation of *brothers* is *brothers and sisters*.
 - b. *for I am speaking to those who know the law*
 - 1) *the* is not in the Greek but simply states *law*.
 - 2) We can't determine whether Paul was speaking specifically to Jews who knew *the law* but to Jews as well as Greeks who understood his legal concept.
 - 3) Douglas Moo, *It is almost certain, then, that Paul here refers to the Mosaic law, but no implications about the ethnic background of his audience can be derived from the fact.*
 - c. The principle is the law binds a person only when he is alive.
 - 1) Romans 6:7, *For one who has died has been set free from sin.*
 - 2) C. E. B. Cranfield, *The meaning is that the law's authority over a man lasts so long, but only so long, as he lives.*
 - 3) John Stott, *So law is for life; death annuls it. Paul states this as a legal axiom, universally accepted and unchallengeable.*

2. The principle is illustrated by marriage (2-3), ***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.***

a. The principle of marriage is that marriage vows end at the death of a spouse (2)

- 1) 1 Corinthians 7:39, *A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *Paul's example was especially true in Jewish life where the Mosaic Law did not permit a woman to divorce her husband. In the illustration the wife represents the believer and the husband the Law.*
- 3) Robert Mounce, *As a woman whose husband has died is free to marry another, so also are believers, since they have died to the law, free to belong to Christ.*

b. A woman is free to marry another man on the death of her husband but she is an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive.

- 1) Matthew 5:32, *But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*
- 2) A widow who marries again is not an adulteress.
- 3) *the law of marriage is literally law of the husband or better, law relating to the husband.*
 - a) There has been some confusion as to relating this term to Paul's statement in verse 4.
 - b) Some would try to tie verses 2-3 to verse 4, where the first husband represents the law, the second husband represents Christ, and the woman represents the Christian.
 - c) The issue is that the law has not died but that the Christian has died to the law. The point is that verses 2-3 illustrate the general principle in verse 1 but as noted by Douglas Moo, *he also sets up the theological application in v. 4 by citing an example -marriage - in which severance from the law enables one to enter into a new relationship.*
 - d) Grant Osborne, *When we recognize there is no spiritual meaning of husband and wife here, this illustration takes its rightful place as demonstrating the fact that when Christ came, God's people died to the law and entered a new realm of faith in him.*

B. Paul declares that Christians are no longer bound to the Law (4-6)

1. The reason is that Christians have died to the law (4), ***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 you may bear fruit for God.***

a. As noted above, *likewise*, identifies the previous illustration as similar to that of the Christian.

- 1) The Law has not died but we have died to the Law because of the death of Jesus Christ,
- 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The Law did not die, because God's Law still rules over men.*

b. The reason Christians have died to the Law is to live through Christ for the purpose of bearing fruit for God.

- 1) Galatians 2:19, *For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.*
- 2) Christians no longer are bound to the Law but belong to Jesus, Romans 6:4, *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

2. The principle is illustrated by describing who a person serves before and after trusting Christ (5-6)

a. Life in the flesh leads to eternal death (5), ***For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.***

1) *sinful passions* refers to our human nature.

- a) Romans 7:18, *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.*
- b) Romans 7:25, *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*

- 2) *aroused by the Law*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The Law aroused sinful passions by prohibiting them. Forbidden fruit is the sweetest kind in the mouth, but it often produces a stomachache (cf. Gen. 3).*
 - b) Paul is describing an unconverted person who is controlled by the flesh.
 - c) A Christian may, at times, succumb to the flesh but is not obligated to the flesh, note Romans 8:9, *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *To be “dead to the Law” does not mean that we lead lawless lives. It simply means that the motivation and dynamic of our lives does not come from the Law: it comes from God’s grace through our union with Christ.*

- 3) The mix of sinful passions aroused by the Law results in death.
 - a) Romans 6:21, *But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*
 - b) Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 - c) Grant Osborne, *The question is why in light of the incredible powers at work and the horrifying results, anyone in their right mind would ever want to return to that!*

- b. Life in the Spirit leads to eternal life (6), ***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.***
 - 1) Paul provides a summary of verses 1-5 in verse 6.
 - a) *But now*
 - 1] Paul reveals the time frame for the change.
 - 2] It is the point of conversion, justification, which opens the way to sanctification.
 - 3] Romans 8:6 affirms the change and Romans 6:13 commands the change, *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.*
 - b) This verse speaks of the Old and New Covenant, the written code and the Spirit.
 - 1] The article (the) is absent in the Greek but I believe the emphasis is on the Holy Spirit.
 - 2] Romans 2:29, *But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*
 - 3] 2 Corinthians 3:6, *who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*
 - 4] Paul contrasted the written code and the Spirit in Romans 2:27-29, *Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*
 - 5] John Stott, *The distinction Paul has in mind in this neat aphorism is neither between the so-called ‘letter’ and ‘spirit’ of the law, nor between the literal and the allegorical interpretations of Scripture, but between the old covenant which was one of ‘letter’ (gramma), an external code written on stone tablets, and the new covenant which is one of ‘Spirit’ (pneuma), for the new age is essentially the age of the Spirit, in which the Holy Spirit writes God’s law in our hearts.*
 - c) The magnificence of the contrast
 - 1] William Barclay, *When we rule our lives by union with Christ, we rule them not by obedience to a written code of law which may actually awaken the desire to sin but by an allegiance to Jesus Christ within our spirit and our hearts. The motive of our lives is not law but love; and the inspiration of love can make us able to do what the restraint of law was powerless to help us to do.*
 - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *Under Law, no enablement was given. God’s commandments were written on stones and read to the people. But under grace, God’s Word is written in our hearts (2 Cor. 3:1–3).*

CONCLUSION

John Witmer, *It is one thing for a believer to understand that his identification with Jesus Christ means that he has died to sin (6:2) and to count or reckon that to be true (6:11). But it is something else for him to deal with the sin nature that remains within and its efforts to express itself in his thoughts and actions. This is the internal conflict in the area of sanctification that every believer faces.*