

Married to the Law, Married to Christ

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[0 : 00] And it is called Romans for a very simple reason, which is that it's written to the churches in the city of Rome. And this letter is about the gospel. It's about the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Last week we ended chapter 6. You'll remember chapter 6 was asking this one big question, which is, hey, in light of God's grace, do we actually need to obey?

Do we need to live lives of holiness or can we just do whatever we want? And Paul gave us three main reasons, told us, no, actually, belonging to Christ, you continue to walk in his ways.

This morning we're continuing chapter 7. Chapter 7 is related but different. Chapter 7 focuses on the law of God.

Meaning, when we talk about the law, we're talking about God's commands to mankind. And so we can think about the law in a couple ways. In the Old Testament, the law is summarized in the Ten Commandments.

[1 : 01] So it's more than the Ten Commandments, but that's the main summary. That's the high points of the law. In the New Testament, in Matthew chapter 22, Jesus summarizes the law and he says it's really two things.

Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. So that's the law. The Old Testament summarized in the Ten Commandments. In the New Testament, summarizes loving God and loving neighbor.

So this is, again, the follow-on to chapter 6. If we are supposed to obey, if we're supposed to do what God says, which is what chapter 6 says, how do we think about God's law?

What is our relationship to God's law? Even more than that, how do we obey God's law? Where, in fact, do we get the power?

Those are the questions of chapter 7, which is where we turn now. I'm going to invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 7, starting at verse 1. You can turn to page 7 of your worship guide.

[2 : 05] Wherever you turn, remember that this is God's word. In Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5, tells us, every word of God proves true. He's a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Which is why we read now Romans chapter 7, starting at verse 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.

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. 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.

[3 : 16] In order that we may bear fruit for God. 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. 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. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you and we praise you again this morning for sustaining us in our lives, for bringing us here to worship you together. Father, we thank you for your word that brings us life and truth. We ask that you be at work by your Holy Spirit this morning, bringing your word to us. We ask that you would clear our minds, you'd soften our hearts, you'd open our ears and our eyes, that we'd be able to see and hear and believe and understand everything that's written in your word.

[4 : 33] And we ask most of all that you would show us Jesus. We'd grow in our love and our affection and our obedience to him. We ask these things in his mighty name. Amen. Many of you know, and I've said before, that I am an East Coast boy. I grew up right outside Washington, D.C. and you can take the boy out of the East Coast, but you can't take the East Coast out of the boy. And sometimes people ask me, you know, what is different from the East Coast in Colorado? And there's a lot of different answers I could give you. My favorite one comes from someone who told me this. People go to the East Coast to work and they come to Colorado to play. Now, there's a lot of different things you can do to play in Colorado. One of them would be climbing 14ers, which actually is a type of work. So we're going to come around full circle. And if you ask someone, why is it that you climb 14ers? You might hear a variety of answers. I'm going to tell you one answer, though. You will, at least you should, never hear. If you ask someone, why do you climb those tall mountains? They should never say to you, because it's so easy.

[5 : 47] I tell you that because I have told you before and I will tell you again this morning, I have both bad news for you and good news. The bad news is that Romans is really hard. The good news is that Romans is really great and worth it. I've told you many times this quote from Andrew Nassili. Paul's letter to the Romans is arguably the single most important piece of literature in the history of the world. And I'm reminding you of that again this morning because we are coming to chapter 7, which is especially intricate. So if we're climbing up a 14er here, this is a steep part of the trail. So we're going to plot a little bit this morning. We're going to build bit by bit, layer by layer, step by step. So let's jump in. First, to understand chapter 7 of the book of Romans, we must remember the categories that Paul gave us in chapter 6. In chapter 6, Paul told us all people in the world fall into two buckets.

[7 : 00] You are either under law or under grace. And being under law and under grace capture the two and only two ways that you can make it to heaven. If you are under law, you make it to heaven by perfectly obeying all of God's laws and never sinning. That's what it means to be under law. So when you look at the Ten Commandments, you perfectly keep them. When it comes to loving God and loving neighbor, you have always done that perfectly.

If you're under law, you must do those perfectly. And if you do, you can make it to heaven. Problem is that's not a real option. It's hypothetical. And it's not real because Paul's already told us in chapter 3, they all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We saw it in our confession of faith this morning that Andy read for us. No mere man, since the fall, is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but does daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

[8:10] So under the law is an option. That's a way to get to heaven, but it's not going to work for you. Under Christ, under grace, that's the other option. If you're under grace, you trust in Jesus Christ that he died the death that you deserved, lived the perfect life you didn't.

So those are the two categories of humanity from Romans chapter 6 that you must keep in mind to make sense of seven. You can be justified by your obedience, or you can be justified by Jesus' obedience.

Those are the options. Okay? That was six. Now, moving on to seven. In seven, Paul says, let's take those two ways of getting to heaven and let's imagine that they are two different marriages.

Okay? Let's take those two ways of getting to heaven. Imagine that there are two marriages. If you are under the law, you are married to the law. If you are under grace, you are married to Jesus Christ.

Two marriages, under the law, married to the law, under grace, married to Jesus Christ. Here's the catch, though. You can only be married to one person at a time.

[9:39] I know that's a shock. You have to be able to switch from one marriage to the other marriage. How do you do that? That is simply what Paul is getting at in verses 1 through 3.

He's saying this. Marriages are binding as long as both people live. Of course, you know this. What do you say when you take marriage vows? As long as we both shall live.

So how are you going to get out of this bad situation of being under the law, married to the law? Well, if you're going to get out of that marriage, someone has to die.

Unless someone dies, the marriage can't end. That takes us to verse 4. Surprise! That happened. You did die to the law.

Verse 4. Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law. How did this happen? Through the body of Christ.

[10:40] So your marriage to the law ended through the body of Christ, which is a reference to Jesus' death and resurrection. When Christ died, you died to the law if you have faith in him.

You died to your performance determining whether or not you enter heaven. Dying to the law means that you died to your moral performance determining whether or not you enter heaven.

So once again, Paul is circling back to this concept we talked about multiple times in chapter 6, which is union with Christ. That is, what is true of Jesus is true of you.

So you died to the law. You're not in that marriage anymore. You're in a new marriage, actually. That's what verse 4 also tells us. The result, this is verse 4, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead.

You switched marriages. You're not married to the law anymore. You're married to Christ. When Christ died, you entered a new marriage if you belong to him.

[12:12] Christ's death frees you from an abusive spouse and brings you to a loving spouse.

That begins to answer the next question. We have two marriages. what were these marriages like? Marriage to the law, being under the law, is terrible.

And being married to the law and under the law is terrible because it is an abusive marriage. It's abusive for these reasons. All the law can do is accuse and condemn.

So the law is looking in on you. Imagine the Ten Commandments are talking to you and what are the Ten Commandments saying? They're saying this, obey me or die. That's what the law is saying.

That's what your spouse is saying to you if you're married to the law. That's the control, the rule that it has over you. Is that the kind of spouse that you want? Do you want an accusing, a condemning spouse, one that says, obey me or die?

[13:35] Of course not, right? That's why verse 6 uses this strong language, that which held us captive. That's the sense in which the law is holding you captive.

So it's abusive and terrible in this sense. It's also abusive and terrible in two other senses. The second one is this, the law is a command to obey. It does not give the ability to obey.

The law gives the command to obey. It does not give the ability to obey. Think about it this way. The law is looking in on you.

Imagine now it's love God and love neighbor. So we talked about the Ten Commandments says keep me or die. Let's say the law comes to you and says love your neighbor as yourself. Do you do that?

Do you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself? I certainly don't.

[14:39] And I actually can't. I actually can't do that in and of myself. I can't change my own heart. I'm not powerful enough to do that. The law also will not change my heart.

This is why we've sung before if you've been with us the song Run and Run which says this. Run and Run the law demands but gives me neither feet nor hands.

Which is a way of saying the law can command me to obey it can't give me the ability to obey. We'll talk about that more in coming weeks. If you thought that was bad actually it's going to get worse.

So those are the first two reasons the law is abusive. The law accuses and condemns number one. Number two the law commands you to obey. It doesn't give you the ability to obey but it's actually more sinister than that.

Look at me at verse five. It's not just that the law doesn't give you the ability to obey. The law actually makes it more likely that you won't obey. Verse five says this for while we're living in the flesh 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.

[15:57] Now we're not going to dwell on this a lot because we're going to talk about it in length verses seven through twelve but the point is this when we find out that we cannot do something we want to do it more.

When we find out that we cannot do something we decide that actually we're even more interested than we ever were before. I think it's on page eight of your worship guide there's a quote that basically says we hear do not and we think why not?

so the law comes it actually makes us more likely to do what's wrong and so I tell you all of these things to drive at this point the law is a terrible spouse that is not a marriage you want to be in the law is a terrible spouse because it condemns you you're captive to it that's what verse six says the law is a terrible spouse because it actually doesn't give you any resources to do what it commands the law is a terrible spouse because it makes your behavior worse that's a rough marriage that's a dysfunctional relationship that's the relationship you had to the law before you were in Christ that's the relationship you have to the law right now if you are outside of Christ you have a dysfunctional abusive relationship with the law now I want you to feel the weight of that because if you feel the weight of it you'll feel the sense of relief and joy that comes for us in verse six which tells us this but now we are released from the law sigh of relief shake it out shake it out you're free from the law that nightmare is over that terrible marriage has ended die to that which held us captive yeah that means you're no longer a prisoner to the law if the law comes to you now the ten commandments walk up to you and they say obey me or die what can you do you thumb your nose at it

I don't have to obey you or die I'm not captive to you anymore now thumbing your nose at the law doesn't mean you disobey the law you're thumbing your nose at being captive to the law but actually you are able for the first time to do as I've told you before the right thing for the right reason being married to the law didn't give you any ability didn't give you any power to obey now you're in a good marriage you're in a marriage that actually provides motivation and power look with me again at verse 5 verse 5 tells us we were living in the flesh this is again a concept from previous chapters that we've discussed if you're living in the flesh that's the opposite of living by the Holy Spirit so if you're living by the flesh your heart the center of your heart is still controlled and ruled and governed and dominated by sin that's what it means to live in the flesh flesh means multiple things for the apostle

Paul in this instance the flesh means the opposite of the spirit so you were verse 5 living according to the flesh you are now verse 6 living in the new way of the spirit sin doesn't rule control dominate or reign in your heart anymore if you are married to Jesus Christ if you are under grace your heart is ruled and controlled and dominated by him you were married to a spouse who condemned you you were married to the law you were married to a spouse who told you to do things that you were incapable of doing on your own you were married to a spouse who said obey me or die now if you're in Christ you're married to a spouse who gives you life now if you're in Christ you're married to a spouse who gives you life you were verse 5 bearing fruit for death you are now verse 4 bearing fruit for God there's a different thing going on there's a different relationship you now the law comes to you and says love your neighbor as yourself you think oh yeah

[21:24] God's at work in my heart actually I'm starting to want to do that I'm realizing I have new powers and abilities page 8 of your worship guide says this the new covenant believer never looks at the law without understanding that his relationship to it is the fruit of his union with Christ which is a way of saying this if you're married to Christ if you're under grace you look at the ten commandments and instead of thinking man that's the ten commandments are condemning me and ruling over me no you think oh wow that's the type of person God's making me to be those are the sorts of actions that are going to come out as the Holy Spirit is at work changing my heart that's the type of person I'm going to become as I am taken away from a heart of stone and given a heart of flesh oh you're saying love God and love neighbors what you're saying is the Holy

Spirit's going to make me into the type of person who loves my neighbor as myself wow what a wonderful thing that's how you think about the law now because the law is not a condemning spouse the law is the fruit of your marriage with Christ what the law could not produce God by the work of his Holy Spirit given to his people because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ now does in you when you got married did it change you are you different now because of your marriage I hope so and I hope it's in positive ways although I know that's not always the case this marriage to Christ is changing you and it is changing you in positive ways verse 4 so that you may belong to another in order that we may bear fruit for God the law is now a description not of how you fall short but of your future self what God is making you to be

I've told you before and I'll tell you again Romans is the fifth gospel and it's the fifth gospel because what Paul teaches Jesus taught first Jesus says this in John chapter 15 already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you in other words your justification is in my actions not your actions abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me if you're married to the law that's not going to produce good fruit in your life ten commandments can't change your heart I can I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing what makes all of this possible

Paul tells us that as well in verse four you died to the law so you may belong to another that's Jesus Christ to him who has been raised from the dead it's possible because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ do you want the power to obey God do you want the power to do what's right for the right reasons do you want the power to love God and love neighbor if you're in Christ you do and you do because you are married to him not the law and his Holy Spirit is at work in you and it's been given to you because of

Jesus death and resurrection and so you can sing this which is true the power that raised him from the grave now works in us to powerfully save he frees our hearts to live his grace go tell of his goodness let's pray our father in heaven we thank you that you come to us not as the law comes with condemnation with standards to meet if we want to be accepted no that you tell us we're clean because of the word that you've spoken to us and we ask that you would be at work in us by the Holy Spirit reminding us of these truths that you continue to turn our hearts of you and follow you more and more we ask these things in

[27:10] Jesus name amen