
Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON **XV**: DEAD TO THE LAW, UNITED TO GOD — CHAP 7 VERSES 1-6

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR —

All mankind is under the condemnation of sin (with special emphasis upon the non-Jew) since God has plainly revealed himself and we have rejected that revelation; Rom 1:18-32

The Jew cannot rely upon their status as a Jew nor their privilege of having the law to excuse them from this condemnation for they have the law but failed to obey it; Rom 2:1-29

The whole world is therefore under the condemnation of sin; Rom 3:1-20

God provides justification from sin apart from the law through the sacrificial atoning death of his Son, the Lord Jesus; Rom 3:21-31

This justification by faith in the work of Christ is the teaching of the entire bible, OT and NT, as is evidenced by the lives of Abraham (before the law) and David (under the law); Rom 4:1-25

Believers therefore have the assurance of future glory, producing peace and joy; Rom 5:1-11

This assurance of future glory is entirely based on the work of Christ. As we were connected with Adam by our natural birth, so are we connected with Christ, the Second Adam, by our new birth and we therefore have security; Rom 5:12-21

Relating back to a statement made in chapter 5 (*"where sin increased, grace increased all the more,"* 5:20b), Paul addresses a possible objection: should we therefore sin so that grace may abound? To this Paul is abhorred, teaching that believers have died and risen again with Christ and are therefore dead to sin. Paul admonishes his readers: (1) we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God; (2) do not let sin reign; and (3) do not present ourselves as instruments of sin; Rom 6:1-14

Continuing his discussion concerning sin, Paul clarifies a statement he made (*"you are not under law, but under grace,"* 6:14b). One possible objection to that is, since we are now under grace and not the law, are we free to sin? Paul again is abhorred by the thought and teaches that all people are slaves to some master: either of sin unto death or of righteousness unto everlasting life. Neutrality is impossible. Paul therefore commands his readers that just as we served sin prior to our salvation, so we should now serve God; Rom 6:15-23

Paul now turns his attention to the place of the law, again expounding and clarifying a statement he made in the previous chapter (*"you are not under law, but under grace,"* 6:14b).

ROMANS 7 IN CONTEXT WITH THE ENTIRE BOOK OF ROMANS — How does this teaching about the Mosaic law fit into the development of the letter? Moo gives three manners in which this chapter relates to the rest of the book of Romans:

- First and most generally, Rom. 7 provides the extensive treatment and explanation of the negative effects of the Mosaic law that Paul has briefly mentioned several times in the letter (cf. 3:19-20, 27-28; 4:13-15; 5:13-14, 20)
- Second, 7:1-6 repeats with respect to the law many of the same points that were made in Rom. 6 with respect to sin. As in chap. 6 the believer has 'died to sin' (v. 2), and thus been 'freed from it' (v. 6) so that is no longer 'rules' (v. 1). And as in chap. 6 this freedom from sin also means 'serving' righteousness, or God, so that 'fruit' pleasing to God may be produced (vv. 18-22), so in 7:1-6 freedom from the law means being joined to Christ in a new 'service' so that 'fruit' pleasing to God may be forthcoming (vv. 4-6).
- The third point of contact between Rom. 7 and the preceding context is with the assertion of vv. 14 and 15 that the believer is no longer 'under the law.' Indeed, this statement is the immediate occasion for the chapter, as Paul explains what it means no longer to be 'under the law,' how this transfer from the law's dominion has been accomplished, and why it was necessary. [Moo, *Romans*, pg 409f]

THE EMPHASIS OF ROMANS 7 IS THE CHRISTIAN AND THE MOSAIC LAW — "Romans 7 is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible. Scholars, preachers, and laypeople alike are fascinated by Paul's vivid description of human struggle and frustration in vv. 7-25. Along with this fascination has come vigorous debate over the identity of the person depicted in these verses — unregenerate Paul, regenerate Paul, the back-sliding Christian, and the like. These various identifications have in turn given rise to — or, often, been dictated by — significantly different theologies of sanctification. However, for all our legitimate interest in these questions, we must start our interpretation of this chapter on the right foot by insisting that *anthropology* — *the identity and situation of 'I' of vv. 7-25* — *is a subordinate issue in Rom. 7. The main topic is the Mosaic law. Paul makes two basic points. First, using the analogy of marriage, Paul argues that a person's bondage to the law must be severed in order that he or she may be put into a new relationship with Christ (7:1-6). This, the 'positive' teaching of the chapter, gives rise to questions about the origin and nature of the law. These Paul answers in 7:7-25, where he shows that the law is from God, but that it has nevertheless become the unwitting tool of sin, being used to confirm and imprison in death. Despite its divine origin, the law can neither justify nor sanctify. 'What the law could not do because it was weakened by the flesh' (8:3a) succinctly*

sums up this second major point in Rom. 7.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 409]

TODAY’S LESSON IN A NUTSHELL

while under law we brought forth fruit unto sin, under grace we bring forth fruit unto righteousness; vv. 1-6

the insufficiency of the law to sanctify; vv. 7-25

the law operating to bring conviction of sin (cf. 3:20); vv. 7-13

The law enlightens the believer’s conscience but cannot destroy the dominion of sin. Paul starts with the insistence that we must be delivered from the law. Why? Because it is evil? No; but because it cannot produce holiness. It can produce only the knowledge and the sense of sin; which are the constituents of genuine conviction. These two effects are attributed to the operation of the law, in verses 7, 8. These ideas are amplified in verses 9-11. The inference is drawn in ver. 12, that the law is good; and in ver. 13, that the evil which it incidentally produces is to be attributed to sin, the exceeding turpitude of which becomes thus the more apparent. [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 221]

the inward conflict between sin and holiness, the law not offering the believer any relief; vv. 14-25

The law could not produce peace as the Jew asserted but rather only excited the mind to conflict, anxiety and distress. Yet the fault was not the law which was spiritual, holy and good; rather, the fault lies within man because he is a sinner. “This, again, rendered it proper to vindicate the holiness of the law, as well as to demonstrate its use in convincing of sin; while at the same time he proves that all its light and all its authority, so far from being sufficient to subdue sin, on the contrary, only tend, by the strictness of its precepts and the awful nature of its sanctions, the more to excite and bring into action the corruptions of the human heart.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 277]

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. (Rom 7:1-6 KJV)

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. (Rom 7:1-6 NIV)

Are ye ignorant, brethren — for to those knowing law I speak — that the law hath lordship over the man as long as he liveth? for the married woman to the living husband hath been bound by law, and if the husband may die, she hath been free from the law of the husband; so, then, the husband being alive, an adulteress she shall be called if she may become another man’s; and if the husband may die, she is free from the law, so as not to be an adulteress, having become another man’s. So that, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of the Christ, for your becoming another’s, who out of the dead was raised up, that we might bear fruit to God; for when we were in the flesh, the passions of the sins, that [are] through the law, were working in our members, to bear fruit to the death; and now we have ceased from the law, that being dead in which we were held, so that we may serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter. (Rom 7:1-6 Young’s Literal Translation)

“As we have seen, this paragraph contains the main point that Paul wants to make in this chapter. It has four parts.

- In v. 1, the general principle on which the teaching of the paragraph is based is given: death severs one’s bondage to the law.
- This is the case in marriage, where the death of a spouse sets the other spouse ‘free from’ the law that brands a second marriage as adulterous (vv. 2-3).
- **This general principle is applied to Christian experience in v. 4, which is the key verse in the paragraph; Christians, in dying with Christ, have suffered a death that severs their bondage to the law and that makes possible**

their new relationship with Jesus Christ.

- Then, in vv. 5-6, Paul shows the need for, and results of, this ‘transfer of masters’ by contrasting the situation of people ‘in the flesh,’ in whose case the law aids and abets sin, with the situation of people who are released from the law and serve in ‘newness of Spirit.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 410f]

“‘Ye are not under the law, but under grace.’ This is the main idea in the whole context, and is that which the following passage carries out and enforces. The thing to be proved is, that we are not under the law. The proof is, that the law does not bind the dead. But we are dead, therefore we are free from the law. This idea, that the law binds a man only so long as he lives, is presented as a general principle, and is then illustrated by a specific example. That example is the law of marriage, which ceases to bind the parties when one of them is dead. So the law, as a covenant of works, ceases to bind us when death has loosed its bonds. We are as free as the woman whose husband is dead.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 214]

v 1 — Or are you ignorant — only here and 6:3; like Paul’s more customary formula “*do you not know*,” it introduces teaching which Paul assumes his readers are familiar. Paul is referring back probably to his comment in 6:14 where he mentions, almost in passing, that Christians are not “*under the law*.” Paul undoubtedly wanted to elaborate on that statement lest there be misunderstanding.

brethren, those who know the law — This is the first time in the epistle Paul has addressed his hearers as “*brethren*.” Some take this to signal a shift in his audience, from the church as a whole to now only the Jewish Christians. But considering the context and the connection between this passage and the preceding, it is unlikely Paul is making any specific emphasis of that kind. “Many of the Gentile Christians in Rome were probably ‘god-fearers,’ or synagogue worshipers, before coming to Christ. In any case, new converts would have been exposed to the OT and the law early in their Christian instruction. 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. *What these converts know is a general principle: ‘that the law rules over a person only as long as he or she lives.’* This principle is similar to a maxim of the rabbis: ‘if a person is dead, he is free from the Torah and the fulfilling of the commandments.’ Paul may be citing this principle, although the relative dates call for caution, and the principle is of such a nature that it could have parallels in almost any culture.... Texts such as Gal 4:21 and 1 Cor 10:1 show that Paul assumes knowledge of the OT among his Gentile converts.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 411f]

the law has dominion over a man so long as he liveth — “What law does the apostle here refer to it? It may be understood of law without any restriction. Law, all laws, (in the aspect in which they are contemplated,) bind a man only so long as he lives. Or, it may mean specifically the Mosaic law; or, more definitely still, the marriage law. *There is no reason for these limitations. The proposition is a general one; though the application is doubtless to the law of which he had been speaking, and specially to the law referred to in 6:14, from which he says we are now free.*” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 214f]

hath dominion — “Greek, *Rules; exercises lordship*. The Law is here personified, and represented as setting up a lordship over a man, and exacting obedience.” [Barne’s *Notes on the Bible: Romans*]

v 2, 3 — A COMMON ILLUSTRATION FROM LIFE — “Paul illustrates this general principle with an allusion to the marriage relationship. Perhaps alluding to the Mosaic law, Paul notes that ‘the woman who is married is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives.’ But if her husband dies, she is ‘released from the law relating to her husband.’ In v. 3, Paul spells out the implications of this situation: as long as her husband lives, the woman ‘will be called’ an adulteress if she is to ‘be joined to’ (i.e., marry) another man. On the other hand, were her husband to die, she would be ‘free from the law.’ This ‘law’ refers back to ‘the law relating to her husband’ in v. 2, but Paul may have chosen to use an unqualified reference in order to set up his application more effectively. Since her husband’s death frees her from the law, the woman will not be labeled an adulteress if she marries again.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 412f]

PAUL USES THIS ILLUSTRATION IN A GENERAL SENSE ONLY — “*Paul’s point is clear enough; but the problems arise when we seek to relate the point to the conclusion in v. 4.... Probably, then, Paul does not intend us to find significance in the details of vv. 2-3.* Thus many recent interpreters conclude, arguing that vv. 2-3 make a single point — death severs relationship to the law. The verses illustrate v. 1 as a preparation for v. 4. We think that this conclusion is basically sound; but it may go too far in minimizing some of the striking parallels between vv. 2-3 and v. 4: the use of ‘join to’ to express the relationship, respectively, of wife and husband (vv. 2-3) and of the Christian and Christ (v. 4), and the emphasis on the new union that follows ‘death.’ *Not only, then, does Paul in vv. 2-3 illustrate the general principle that ‘death frees one from the law’ (v. 1); 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.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 413f] “This verse is a specific illustration of the general principle in Romans 7:1, that death dissolves those connections and relations which make law binding in life. It is a simple illustration; and if this had been kept in mind, it would have saved much of the perplexity which has been felt by many commentators, and much of their wild vagaries in endeavoring to show that ‘men are the wife, the law of the former husband, and Christ the new one;’ or that ‘the old man is the wife, sinful desires the husband, sins the children.’ Such expositions are sufficient to humble us, and to make us mourn over the puerile and fanciful interpretations which even wise and good people often give to the Bible.” [Barne’s *Notes on the Bible: Romans*] “There is an apparent awkwardness in carrying out the figure. The law, in

vers. 1, 2, is represented by *the husband who rules (hath dominion)*. On the death of the husband the woman is released. In ver. 4, *the wife* (figuratively) dies. ‘Ye are become dead to the law that ye should be married to another.’ But as the law is previously represented by *the husband*, and the woman is released by the husband’s death, so, to make the figure consistent, the *law* should be represented as dying in order to effect the believer’s release.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 73f]

is freed from — “κατήρηται ἀπό [katērgētai apo] is an expression which never occurs in common Greek. The same idiom is found in ver. 6 of this chapter, and in Galatians 5:4. Καταργεῖν [katargein] means to invalidate, to render void. The idea is, that the relation to her husband is broken off, and she is free. Law of her husband means law relating to her husband.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 215] “Perfect passive indicative of katargeō, to make void. She stands free from the law of the husband. Cf. 6:6.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 366]

she shall be called — χρηματίσει [chrēmatisēi], authoritatively and solemnly declared to be. Χρηματίζειν [chrēmatisēin] is literally *to transact business*, and specially the business of the state, to give decisions, or decrees; and specially in the New Testament, to utter divine responses; see Matthew 2:12, 22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Hebrews 8:5; 11:7. Compare Romans 11:4.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 216]

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND RE-MARRIAGE — Prior to continuing, we must comment on how some use these verses against re-marriage. **“These verses are sometimes cited to prove that remarriage on any basis other than the death of one’s spouse is adulterous. Whether this is the biblical teaching or not, these verses at any rate are probably not relevant to the issue.** Paul is not teaching about remarriage but citing a simple example to prove a point. In such a situation, one often generalizes to what is usually true in order to simplify the analogy. Since Paul does not mention divorce, we can assume that the remarriage of the woman has taken place without a divorce of any kind; and any such remarriage is, of course, adulterous. Further, any body of law that Paul may be citing — Roman or OT (cf. Deut 25:1-4) — allows for remarriage on grounds other than the death of the spouse. His readers, who ‘know the law’ (v. 1), would certainly recognize this possibility without it in any way spoiling the effectiveness of Paul’s analogy.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 413] **“This passage has absolutely nothing to say about divorce and cannot legitimately be used as an argument from silence to teach that divorce is never justified for a Christian and, consequently, that only the death of a spouse gives the right to remarry.”** [MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, pg 360] “So long as a husband lives and a wife lives, neither one of them can be free to marry except in a certain case, and that exception is discussed elsewhere. He is just discussing the general principles here.” [Carroll, *Interpretation of English Bible*; vol 5 pg 153]

v 4 — “In this verse, the center of the paragraph, Paul states an inference drawn from vv. 1-3. This inference depends not only on the principle stated in v. 1 but also on the illustration and expansion of that principle in vv. 2-3. **We might paraphrase: ‘Recognizing the validity of the principle that “death severs one’s bondage to the law,” you believers can understand that, like this woman, you have through a death been severed from your bondage to the law and been enabled to be joined to another.’**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 414]

DEAD TO THE LAW — “‘You have been put to death to the law’ is reminiscent of the main point of chap. 6: ‘we have died to sin’ (cf. vv. 2 and 11). What does this mean? ... [Interpretations include: *free from the law’s power to condemn (accepted among almost all Reformed theologians), free from trying to obtain justification from the law, or some combination of the two.* Some reference to the condemnation by the law must be included because the] context connects being bound to the law with existence ‘in the flesh’ (vv 5-6), and with sin’s power to bring death (vv. 7-12; and not the reference to condemnation in 8:1). But **we should not confine the meaning to condemnation alone. Throughout chaps. 5-8, Paul focuses not so much on the condemnation that comes when the law is disobeyed — ‘the curse of the law’ (Gal 3:13) — as on the failure of the law to deal with the problem of sin — ‘the inability of the law’ (cf. 8:3a). Thus, in vv. 5-6, where Paul elaborates v. 4, the law is presented as not only failing to deal with sin but as actually stimulating sin in the person who is ‘bound’ to it. That law which Jews, not unnaturally, considered a great bulwark against sin is actually, according to Paul, an instrument that sin has used to produce more sin (vv. 5,8) and to make the sin problem even worse than it was without the law (vv. 9-11, 13). This suggests that, as in 6:14, Paul in 7:4 is viewing the law as a ‘power’ of the ‘old age’ to which the person apart from Christ is bound. The underlying conception is again salvation-historical, as is suggested also by the use of the ‘letter’ / ‘Spirit’ contrast in v. 6. Just as, then, the believer ‘dies to sin’ in order to ‘live to God’ (chap. 6), so he or she is ‘put to death to the law’ in order to be joined to Christ. Both images depict the transfer of the believer from the old realm to the new. As long as sin ‘reigns,’ God and righteousness cannot; and neither, as long as the law ‘reigns,’ can Christ and the Spirit.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 414f]**

RELEASED FROM THE BINDING FORCE OF THE LAW — **“It is this deliverance from the power, or ‘binding authority,’ of the law that Paul describes in this verse. In being released from the law in this sense, the believer is, naturally, freed from the condemning power of the law.** But we introduce categories that are foreign to Paul — at least at this point — by distinguishing between the law in its condemning power and the law as a ‘rule of life.’ Paul plainly teaches here a deliverance from the ‘binding force’ of the law as a whole. But, to recapitulate what we have said on 6:14, this must be carefully qualified.

- First, we must remember that Paul is not here speaking of the OT as a whole, but of the Mosaic law.
- And, second, he is speaking of the Mosaic law as a system or body. This means that it would be premature to conclude from this text that the law can play no role at all in the life of the believer. For to be ‘dead to the law,’ as we have seen, means to be delivered from the ‘power-sphere’ of the law. **It does not necessarily mean that the believer ‘has nothing**

more to do with the law.’ Thus, positively, as a *‘witness’* (1:2; 3:21) the law continues to teach the believer much that is indispensable about God’s holiness and the holiness he expects of his people.

- Moreover, while this verse implies that the believer is not directly under the authority of the law — thus excluding any ‘third use of the law’ in the traditional sense [referring to the role of the law as a positive authoritative guide to the Christian life] — this is not to say that individual commandments from that law may not be re-applied as *‘new covenant law’* (see 8:4; 13:8-10).
- Finally, the law of which Paul speaks here is the *Mosaic* law, not ‘law’ in the Lutheran sense of ‘anything that commands us.’ *Paul affirms here that the believer is no longer under the authority of the Mosaic law, not that he or she is under no law at all. In fact, Paul himself makes clear that the believer is still ‘under law’ in the broader sense — still obligated to certain commandments (see Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 7:19; 9:20-22).*

In a passage somewhat parallel to this one, Paul says of himself that he ‘died to the law in order that he might live for God’ (Gal 2:19). In that context (cf. v. 15: ‘we who are Jews by birth’), Paul is describing his experience as a Jewish convert to Christianity and, as in this paragraph, showing that he had to be released from the binding authority of the law if he were to be able to please God. We can understand how a Jew who became a Christian would ‘die to the law,’ for the Jew would have grown up under the authority of that law. But how could it be said of Gentile converts that they would need to ‘die to the law’? In order to evade this problem, some expositors suggest that the ‘law’ in 7:4 is moral law generally or that the ‘brothers’ whom Paul addresses in this passage are exclusively Jewish Christians. But neither solution is acceptable. While Paul never makes the matter clear, we suggest that Paul views the Jewish experience with the Mosaic law as paradigmatic for the experience of all people with ‘law.’ Israel stands in redemptive history as a kind of ‘test case,’ and its relationship with ‘the law is *ipso facto* applicable to the relationship of all people with that ‘law’ which God has revealed to them (cf. 2:14-15). In 7:4, then, while being ‘put to death to the law’ is strictly applicable only to Jewish Christians, Paul can affirm the same thing of the whole Roman community because the experience of Israel with the Mosaic law is, in a transferred sense, also their experience. And, of course, Paul also wants to make clear that, in the new era, in which righteousness is revealed ‘apart from the law’ (cf. 3:21), Gentiles have no need to come under the law to become full-fledged members of the people of God.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 415ff]

you were put to death — ἐθανατώθητε (ethanatōthēte) Note the passive “you were put to death,” putting the stress on the divine initiative, “you have been made to die [by God]”

THROUGH THE DEATH OF CHRIST — “The instrument by which the believer is put to death to the law is ‘the body of Christ.’ ... [H]e must be referring to the physical body of Christ, put to death on the cross for us.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 417] “That is, by his body crucified; or in other words, by his death; compare Ephesians 2:15, ‘Having abolished in his flesh the enmity,’ etc. that is, by his death. Colossians 1:22, ‘In the body of his flesh through death,’ etc. Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24, ‘Who bare our sins in his own body on the tree.’ The sense, is, therefore, that by the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice; by his suffering for us what would be sufficient to meet the demands of the Law; by his taking our place, he has released us from the Law as a way of justification; freed us from its penalty; and saved us from its curse. Thus released, we are at liberty to be united to the law of him who has thus bought us with his blood.” [Barne’s *Notes on the Bible: Romans*] “That is, by ‘the offering of the body of Jesus Christ,’ Hebrews 10:10. Although the body is only mentioned in this place, as it is said on His coming into the world, ‘A body hast Thou prepared Me,’ yet His whole human nature, composed of soul and body, is intended. Elsewhere His soul, without mentioning His body, is spoken of as being offered. ‘When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin,’ Isaiah 53:10. Dead to the law by the body of Christ, means dead to it by dying in Christ’s death. As believers are one body with Christ, so when His body died, they also died, Romans 6:3, 4. They are therefore, by the sacrifice of His body, or by His death, dead to the law. They are freed from it, and done with it, as it respects either their justification or condemnation, its curse or its reward. They cannot be justified by it, having failed to render to it perfect obedience, Romans 3:20; and they cannot be condemned by it, being redeemed from its curse by Him who was made a curse for them. As, then, the covenant relation of a wife to her husband is dissolved by death, so believers are released from their covenant relation to the law by the death of Christ, with whom they died; for He died to sin, ch. 6:10, and to the law having fulfilled it by His obedience and death, so that it hath no further demand upon Him.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 280]

you might belong to another — “Being dead to the law, their first husband, by their union with Christ in His death, believers are married to Him, and are one with Him in His resurrection. Christ is now their lawful husband, according to the clear illustration employed by the Apostle respecting the institution of marriage, so that, though now married to Him, no fault can be found in respect to their original connection with their first husband, which has been dissolved by death. To believers this is a most consoling truth. They are as completely and as blamelessly free from the covenant of the law as if they had never been under it. Thus the Apostle fully explains here what he had briefly announced in the 14th verse of the preceding chapter, ‘Ye are not under the law, but under grace.’ From the covenant of Adam or of works, believers have been transferred to the covenant of Christ or of grace. I will ‘give thee for a covenant of the people’ — all the redeemed people of, God.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 280] “That you might be united to another, and come under his law. This is the completion of the illustration in Romans 7:2,3. As the woman that is freed from the law of her husband by his death, when married again comes under the authority of another, so we who are made free from the Law and its curse by the death of Christ, are brought under the new law of fidelity and obedience to him with whom we are thus united. The union of Christ and his people is not unfrequently illustrated by the most tender of all earthly connections,

that of a husband and wife, Ephesians 5:23-30; Revelation 21:9. 'I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife,' Revelation 19:7." [Barne's Notes on the Bible: Romans]

who was raised — "An important addition, because it refers to *the newness of life* which issues from the rising with Christ. See ch. 6:3, 11, 13, 22." [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 74]

THE LAW CANNOT SANCTIFY — that we should bring forth fruit unto God — "The purpose for which believers have been put to death to the law is 'so that you might be joined to another.' The phrase echoes the language of v. 3: as death separated the woman from her first husband so that she could be 'joined to another,' so the believer has been separated by death from the law in order to be 'joined to' Christ. This new relationship, Paul implies, will be a never-ending one. For the 'other' to which the Christian is joined is 'the one who has been raised from the dead' — never to die again (cf. 6:9-10). This theologically dense verse ends on the practical note that is basic to Paul's concern in this section: 'in order that we might bear fruit for God.' Our new relationship with Christ enables us — and requires us — to produce those character traits, thoughts, and actions that will be 'for God's glory.'" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 417f] "One of the great ends of marriage was to people the world, and the end of the marriage of believers to Christ is, that they may bring forth fruit to God, John 15:4-8. From this it is evident that no work is recognized as fruit unto God before union with Christ. All works that appear to be good previous to this union with Christ are 'dead works,' proceeding from self-love, self-gratification, pride, self-righteousness, or other such motives. 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' We can never look upon the law with a friendly eye till we see it disarmed of the sting of death; and never can bear fruit unto God, nor delight in the law as a rule, till we are freed from it as a covenant, and are thus dead unto sin. How important, then, is the injunction, 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,' — and this applies equally to the law, — 'but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Romans 6:11. *'It is impossible,' says Luther, 'for a man to be a Christian without having Christ; and if he has Christ, he has at the same time all that is in Christ. What gives peace to the conscience is, that by faith our sins are no more ours, but Christ's, upon whom God has laid them all; and that, on the other hand, all Christ's righteousness is ours, to whom God hath given it. Christ lays His hand upon us, and we are healed. He casts his mantle upon us, and we are clothed; for He is the glorious Savior, blessed for ever. Many wish to do good works before their sins are forgiven them, whilst it is indispensable that our sins be pardoned before good works can be done; for good works must be done with a joyful heart, and a good conscience toward God, that is, with remission of sins.'*" [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 281] "The proximate design of our freedom from the law, is our union with Christ; and the design of our union with Christ is, that we should bring forth fruit unto God, that is, that we should be holy. Here, therefore, as in the preceding chapter, the apostle teaches that the law cannot sanctify; that it is necessary we should be delivered from its bondage, and be reconciled to God, before we can be holy." [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 217]

v 5 — "*With his now-familiar 'when ... now' (vv. 5-6) contrast between the pre-Christian and Christian situations, Paul explains why it is necessary that believers be freed from the domain of the law.* In describing the person outside of Christ as being 'in the flesh [*sarx*],' Paul means, in effect, that the non-Christian is 'enveloped in,' and hence controlled by, narrowly human, this-worldly principles and values. We must again understand Paul's language against the background of his salvation-historical framework. Paul pictures *sarx* as another 'power' of the old age, set in opposition to the Spirit — with which *sarx* is always contrasted in chaps. 7-8. As both Rom 8:9 and the 'when' in this verse make clear, this situation is an objective one in which all non-Christians find themselves and from which all Christians are delivered in Christ." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 418]

SIN, THE LAW, AND DEATH — "Existence in the domain of the flesh is determined by the three other 'powers' of the old age: sin, the law, and death. In a sequence that is determinative for the direction of his argument in vv. 7ff, Paul brings these three together, claiming that 'sinful passions that were through the law were working in our members, with the result that we were bearing fruit for death.' In asserting that 'sinful passions' are 'through the law,' Paul reaffirms the close connection between sin and the law that he has touched on before (3:20; 4:15; 5:20). *Here, however, he appears to go further and speaks of the law as not just revealing sin (3:20) or as turning sin into transgression (5:20), but as actually producing sin itself....[T]he 'sinful passions' are those desires to disobey God and his law that are, paradoxically, exacerbated by the law itself. As Paul explains more fully in 7:7-11, the law, in setting forth God's standard, arouses sins by stimulating human beings' innate rebelliousness against God. In addition — although this idea is not so evident in this verse — the law increases the seriousness of sin by branding sinful failure as violation of God's positive decree.* Although Paul has departed from his usual use of the singular 'sin,' the remainder of this verse shows that he continues to characterize sin / sins as an active force: the sinful passions aroused by the law were continually 'working' in the 'members' of the Romans Christians before their conversion. And death — in all its dimensions — was the result." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 419f]

flesh — "'Flesh,' in this sense, is not part of the person, nor even exactly an impulse or 'nature' within the person — for this reason the NIV translation 'sinful nature' for σάρξ [*sarx*] throughout Rom 7-8 is very misleading — but a 'power-sphere' in which a person lives." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 418] "In the language of Scripture, the word *flesh* expresses, in such connections, one or the other of two ideas. or both conjointly. First, a state of moral corruption, as in chap. 8:8, 'Those that are in the flesh;' secondly, a carnal state, i.e., a state in which men are subject to external rites, ceremonies, and commands; or more generally, a legal state, inasmuch as among the Jews, that state was one of subjection to such external rites. Galatians 3:3, 'Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?' Compare Galatians 4:9, where the expression 'weak and beggarly elements' is substituted for

the phrase ‘the flesh;’ see Romans 4:1. In the present case, both ideas appear to be included. The meaning is, ‘when in your unrenewed and legal state.’” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 218]

sinful passions — literally, “the passions of sins.” Paul may have added “sinful” to “passions” because the Greek word itself does not always refer to passions that are sinful.

by the law (KJV), through the law (YLT), aroused by the law (NIV) — the sense seems to be “*sinful passions*” were actually aroused “*by means of*” the law

working — the tense emphasizes the constant activity of sin

members — includes our emotional and cognitive as well as physical faculties. “*In our members*; i.e., in us, not merely in our bodily members, but in all our faculties, whether of soul or body.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 218]

v 6 — “Because Paul’s focus is on the law, he ‘postpones’ what would be the expected contrast between being ‘in the flesh’ and being ‘in the Spirit’ until chap. 8 in order to emphasize once again the Christian’s deliverance from the law (v. 6) and to explore the implications of his teaching for the law itself (vv. 7-25): ‘But now we have been released from the law, dying to that in which we were held captive.’ ***That in which the non-Christian is ‘held captive’ is, as the parallel with v. 4 makes clear, the law. Believers, however, have been set free from this ‘regime’ of the law.***” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 420f]

BONDAGE TO THE LAW — “Before going on to this text, however, we might pause to comment further on this matter of ‘bondage to the law’ in the OT era. Fairbairn argues for a subjective interpretation of ‘being bound to the law,’ as applying only to those in the OT who did not find justification by faith (Fairbairn, “*Revelation of Law*”). But this illegitimately eliminates the necessarily objective contrast between Old Covenant and New, old age and new. I have dealt with this problem before, noting that Paul’s salvation-historical contrasts must not be applied with temporal precision. In particular, it is clear that Paul is often thinking only of the situation new that Christ has come: a situation in which there can no longer be a true ‘saint’ who has not exercised explicit faith in Christ and become a partaker of the New Covenant. From *this* perspective, Paul’s contrasts are absolute — either one is bound to the law, and hence in the old, outdated covenant that produces only condemnation; or one has ‘died to the law’ and been transferred into the new age of the Spirit and life. It is only when we ask the question about the status of OT saints — a question that was probably not in Paul’s mind at the time — that a problem arises. ***Nevertheless, it is clear that OT saints, while not suffering all the penalties incurred through the law, were bound to that law in a way that NT saints are not. Their status is somewhat anomalous, as they participate in the same salvation that we experience — through faith in conjunction with the promise — yet experience also that ‘oldness’ and sense of bondage which was inescapable for even the OT saints. To be sure, these saints could, and did, delight in God’s law (e.g., Ps 119). But even so strong a defender of the continuity of the covenants as Calvin recognized the inevitability of some degree of ‘bondage’ under the Old Covenant that could be taken away only by the coming of Christ: ‘[W]e shall deny that they [the patriarchs] were so endowed with the spirit of freedom and assurance as not in some degree to experience the fear and bondage arising from the law. For, however much they enjoyed the privilege that they had received through the grace of the gospel, they were still subject to the same bonds and burdens of ceremonial observances as the common people.... Hence, they are rightly said, in contrast to us, to have been under the testament of bondage and fear, when we consider that common dispensation by which the Lord at that time dealt with the Israelites.’*** (Calvin, *Institutes* 2.11.9)” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 422f]

held captive by the law — this is not a reference to being held captive by the flesh (Griffith-Thomas) nor by the old pre-Christian circumstances (Denney, Lenski). Note the parallels between this verse and Paul’s teaching about the law in Gal 3:22,23: “*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*” (Gal 3:22,23 KJV)

LETTER VS. SPIRIT — “While, however, still preoccupied with the law, Paul knows where he wants to go eventually in his argument, and so he announces it in the last part of this verse: ‘so that we might serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of letter.’ This is the second time in Romans that Paul has used the letter / Spirit contrast (cf. 2:27-29). As in this earlier text, ***the antithesis is not between the misunderstanding or misuse of the law and the Spirit, nor even, at least basically, between the outer demand and the inner disposition to obey, but between the Old Covenant and the New, the old age and the new.*** (The only other place in which Paul contrasts [letter] and [spirit] is 2 Cor 3:6, where [letter] again depicts the law of Moses as the ‘letters’ carved on tablets, and [spirit] as the Holy Spirit. In this text the contrast is explicitly one between ‘old’ and ‘new’ covenants. These parallels suggest that this antithesis is present here also.) The essence of the old, or Mosaic, covenant, is the law as an ‘external,’ written demand of God. ‘Serving’ in the old state created by the ‘letter’ meant not, as the Jews thought, a curbing of sin, but a stimulating of the power of sin — and ‘death’ is the end-product of sin (v. 5). Now, though, the believer, released from bondage to the law, can serve in the new condition created by God’s Spirit, a condition that brings life (2 Cor 3:6) and fruit pleasing to God (cf. 6:22-23). Before Paul goes on to develop the nature of ‘serving in oldness of letter,’ and of being ‘in the flesh’ where the law arouses sinful passions (7:7-25).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 421f]

serve in newness of Spirit — possibly a reference to the source: “*the new state determined by the Spirit*” which contrasts “*the old state determined by the letter.*”

that we should serve (KJV), so that we serve (NIV) — older commentaries / translations held that the grammar here indicated

“*contemplated results*” only, therefore the KJV: “*that we should serve.*” Recent research teaches it is more likely to denote actual result, therefore the NIV: “*that we serve.*” (see A. T. Robertson)

“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.” — Isaiah 44:3

When a believer has fallen into a low, sad state of feeling, he often tries to lift himself out of it by chastening himself with dark and doleful fears. Such is not the way to rise from the dust, but to continue in it. As well chain the eagle’s wing to make it mount, as doubt in order to increase our grace. ***It is not the law, but the gospel which saves the seeking soul at first; and it is not a legal bondage, but gospel liberty which can restore the fainting believer afterwards. Slavish fear brings not back the backslider to God, but the sweet wooings of love allure him to Jesus’ bosom.*** Are you this morning thirsting for the living God, and unhappy because you cannot find him to the delight of your heart? Have you lost the joy of religion, and is this your prayer, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation?” Are you conscious also that you are barren, like the dry ground; that you are not bringing forth the fruit unto God which He has a right to expect of you; that you are not so useful in the Church, or in the world, as your heart desires to be? Then here is exactly the promise which you need, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.” You shall receive the grace you so much require, and you shall have it to the utmost reach of your needs. Water refreshes the thirsty: you shall be refreshed; your desires shall be gratified. Water quickens sleeping vegetable life: your life shall be quickened by fresh grace. Water swells the buds and makes the fruits ripen; you shall have fructifying grace: you shall be made fruitful in the ways of God. Whatever good quality there is in divine grace, you shall enjoy it to the full. All the riches of divine grace you shall receive in plenty; you shall be as it were drenched with it: and as sometimes the meadows become flooded by the bursting rivers, and the fields are turned into pools, so shall you be — the thirsty land shall be springs of water. [Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* devotional reading for Nov 6th]