



17.
'Released'
Romans 7.1-6

Background

Paul is still in these verses addressing the reality of sin in the life of the believer. In chapter 6 he was addressing the matter from an essentially *theological* perspective, underlining why and how the power of sin, which once ruled our lives, has been broken: whereas in this chapter he addresses the same issue, but now much more from an essentially *pastoral* perspective, explaining how the pockets of sin which still remain are to be battled.

It's perhaps important to note that pastoral ministry is not something distinct from theology, but, rather, actually has good theology as its very foundation. In seeking to help believers address rightly the reality of sin in their lives, he turns his attention to the way in which, in Christ, we now relate to the Law of God.

'Relate' is, indeed, the appropriate word, because, on account of our relationship with the risen Lord Jesus, a significant change has come about in our relationship with the Law of God. And you'll see that the picture he uses to describe this is an essentially relational one – that of marriage.

The illustration is a loose one, so don't go looking for an analogy in which detail after detail sees a correspondence between the picture and the point he is making! It's not like that. Paul's point is simply that as in a marriage the death of a spouse 'frees' the other to marry again, so in relation to the Law of God a death has occurred which releases us from the 'tie' we formerly had to the Law of God as the determiner of our destiny.

Because of the death that Jesus died (in fulfilment of the Law's requirements – obedience to both its commands and its penalties), we are now no longer 'tied' to the Law of God in a way that will see us always falling short and being condemned. We are 'free' now to be married again, this time to the Lord as our Saviour instead of to the Law as our 'slayer': the Law will still 'command' the way we live, but it no longer condemns.

Far from being a change of plan or approach on the part of God, it's precisely this which underpins the Lord's dealings with His people in the OT. It's a *covenant* into which He enters with His people – and a covenant is an essentially relational thing! The Law commands but doesn't condemn!

Read the passages in both Romans 7 and in Deuteronomy, and if you're short of time, then begin with **'days' (1), (2) and (4)**.

1) Monday 13th May – released

Read [Romans 7.1-3](#)

“.. if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him ..” (Rom.7.2)

Paul uses a familiar illustration from the law regarding marriage to illustrate his point: death brings a release from previous responsibilities. The point he’s making? As believers we have been released from the law of God as the determiner of our destiny.

Why do you think that twice in this short part of his letter (vv.1 and 4) Paul very deliberately and emphatically uses the term ‘*adelphoi*’, ‘brothers (and sisters)’ as he presses home his point?

What are the ways in which a sense of being **brothers and sisters** in Christ is best cultivated in the life of a fellowship?

How does the illustration from marriage which Paul uses here help his argument?

Would Paul have been so ready to use this illustration in our society today where marriage is often less common and spouses often less committed?

Prayer: *Lord, You are the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort: draw near in Your comfort to all who grieve the passing of loved ones and afford them peace.*

2) Tuesday 14th May – the new way of the Spirit

Read [Romans 7.4-6](#)

“.. so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit ..” (Rom.7.6)

As a wife is bound to her man in marriage, so we were tied to the law in its capacity to condemn. But a death has occurred – Christ’s – which releases us from that tie, that we might belong to a new Man (the Lord now, not the law) and serve in a new way.

In what ways has your ‘belonging’ to the risen Jesus issued in ‘fruit for God’ in your life?

If we (plural – as a fellowship) are to be ‘bearing fruit for God’, what should we expect to see as the expression of that in our communal life?

What is the difference between serving ‘in the new way of the Spirit’ instead of ‘in the old way of the written code’?

Read [2 Cor.3.1-6](#): what does Paul mean by declaring that the Corinthian believers were ‘a letter from Christ’? In what ways would he envisage that we as a fellowship were such a letter?

Prayer: *Thank You, living God, for the new covenant in Christ whereby You put Your law in our minds and write it on our hearts! May my life display the beauty of Your law.*

3) Wednesday 15th May – relationship

Read [Deuteronomy 5.1-4](#)

“.. the Lord our God made a covenant with us ..” (Deut.5.2)

Misunderstanding the significance of the Law of God for the believer results in either a fear-filled legalism or a self-indulgent licence: key to a right understanding is God’s covenant with His people, at the heart of which is a face-to-face relationship with Him.

In your own personal experience which do you have greater tendency to slip into – ‘legalism’ or ‘licence’?

How can a church best ensure that the Law of God is given its rightful place in the life of the fellowship?

Prayer: *Your Word, my Lord, is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. Help me to be faithful.*

4) Thursday 16th May – saved to serve

Read [Deuteronomy 5.4-22](#)

“.. I am the Lord your God who brought you .. out of the land of slavery ..” (Deut.5.6)

For those in covenant relationship with the Lord, His law *commands*, but no longer *condemns*. This repetition of the ‘ten commandments’ is prefaced by the statement of God’s rescuing grace. We are saved by grace and rescued to serve. Here’s how.

What are the features of a *covenant* relationship with the Lord (see v.3) which transform how we view and relate to His commandments?

How would you explain to others the fact that the *commands* which God’s people now have are part of the *freedom* which God’s people enjoy?

If these ten commandments are given to God’s covenant people, what relevance do they have for ‘the world’?

In being careful as a fellowship (individually and together) to adhere to the commandments how do we avoid becoming or being seen to be ‘pharisaic’?

Prayer: *Direct me in the path of Your commands, Lord, for there I find delight. Turn my heart towards Your statutes and not towards selfish gain ([Ps.119.35f](#)).*

5) Friday 17th May – reverence

Read [Deuteronomy 5.23-27](#)

“.. The Lord our God has shown us His glory and His majesty ..” (Deut.5.24)

The Lord's grace is evidenced not only in His rescuing His people but in His revealing His glory. The response to the former is gratitude and to the latter reverence. We are to tremble before His majesty, listen closely to His Word, and be quick to obey His will.

How were your eyes opened to see something of the glory and majesty of God?

In what ways do these verses challenge you to be more careful in how you 'listen and obey' all that God has told us?

Prayer: *How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from Your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path (Ps.119).*

6) Saturday 18th May – heartfelt homage

Read [Deuteronomy 5.28-29](#)

".. Oh that their hearts would be inclined to fear Me .." (Deut.5.29)

The longing in the heart of the Lord is for a heartfelt leaning in us towards Him. Not something ritual, but something essentially relational. Lips that speak well of Him. Hearts that bow low before Him. Lives that seek first His will and His way.

What is the connection between 'fearing' God and keeping all His commands?

For those who keep all God's commands, in what ways are we to think that it will 'go well with them and their children for ever'?

Prayer: *Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see the more clearly the full splendour of Your own great glory: stir in my heart a zeal for Your glory and a growing delight in Yourself.*

7) Sunday 19th May – grace

Read [Deuteronomy 5.30-33](#)

".. so that you may lie and prosper and prolong your days .." (Deut.5.33)

Grace is the keynote of God's dealings with His people: He gives them a land and He gives them His Law – both alike expressions of His grace. They are to live in the land and to live by His Law, that thereby they may declare to the world His grace and glory.

In what sense was the giving of His Law to His people an expression of God's grace and love?

In what ways have you found in your own experience that as you have 'walked in obedience' you have been blessed in abundance?

Prayer: *It is good to praise You, Lord, to make music to Your Name, O Most High, proclaiming Your love in the morning and Your faithfulness at night (Ps.92.1-2).*