

You Have Been Set Free

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[0:00] Welcome to this week's message from Faith Bible Church of Lake Charles.! We're excited to share a practical Bible-based teaching that we hope will encourage you and strengthen your faith.

! Thanks for listening. Now, here's today's message. We were bound to the law. The law was demanding. Every day, every time a person woke up, try as they might, work as they might, they always failed. They were never able to live up to the expectation of the law.

And the law just stood there, never lifted a finger to help them do right, be right. It just said, no, you're not good enough. And that's what the law did for all of us.

That's the law of Moses that the Apostle Paul is talking about. It was the old covenant. It was the old system of rules and requirements that pointed out our sin, but never gave anyone the power to overcome their sin.

I mean, I know I painted the picture of a bad husband, but the law wasn't bad. The law literally was God's standards. The law is what mirrored or pictured the holiness of God.

[1:23] And I know there were not all parts of the law had to do with necessarily with morality, but it was God's rules at the time, and that's what the law did.

And the law always stood above people and said, you're not good enough. That's what the law does. And the new husband in the story, that's Jesus Christ.

That's the new relationship that you and I are then able to enter into when we died. And that's what the Apostle Paul is going to explain.

Paul is about to show us something in Romans chapter 7, what happened at salvation that fundamentally changed our relationship to the law and allowed us to be united with Jesus.

We're no longer married to a system that condemns us. We're now related to a Savior who transforms us and who gives us the power to live based according to His standards.

[2:32] And here's the main idea that I would like for us to hold on to this morning, and that's this. You've been released. You and I have been released from the law's demands so that we can live in a new relationship that produces real life change.

We've been released from the demands of the law so we can be united in a new relationship that gives us real power for life change.

And that's what happens to us. And that's it. The old marriage is over, and we are in a new relationship. And the life that flows out of that new relationship is something that the old system could never produce in us.

The old system wasn't bad. It just didn't give us the power to live according to its standards or to live up to its standards. Let's look this morning at Romans 7.

I'll read verses 1 through 6. Then we'll go back and we'll take it one section at a time. Verse 1 says, Or do you not know? Brethren, for I speak to those who know the law. Remember, he was speaking primarily to Jews.

[3:43] And there were many Jews in Rome. And he says, You know the law, that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives.

But if a husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress.

But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the

body of Christ, that you may be married to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Verse 5, For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letters.

In chapter 6, what Paul did was he explained that we became dead with respect to sin. We, in effect, died with Christ when He died on the cross.

[5:07] And when He died, we were buried with Him. And when He rose again, we, with Jesus Christ, rose to walk in newness of life.

So sin is no longer our master. God is our master. And as we said a few weeks ago, in the middle of chapter 6, sin no longer has dominion over us, and we shouldn't hand that power back to sin, but surrender our hearts to God.

And that's what the Apostle Paul has, that's the argument he's been building. You don't have to sin. You don't have to live under the power of sin, because the power of sin has been rendered inoperative in your life.

And so live for Jesus Christ. Live according to grace. And God works in our life today according to grace. So from day to day, we live by faith and the grace of God.

But that raises a huge question for the Jewish believers that were reading the Apostle Paul's writing. Well, the Jewish believers in Rome had grown up under the old Judaic system.

[6:17] They had grown up under the law of Moses. And so there were some questions that were coming up when Paul's saying this. He says, you're dead. The law no longer has power over you.

You've been released from the law. And I'm sure some were asking, well, if we're no longer under the law, then what's our relationship to it? Is the law bad?

Did God make a mistake when He gave it? And since we're no longer under the law, does that mean we can live any way we want to? So those are probably some questions that might have been going on in the minds of the Jewish readers as Paul has written this.

And so what Paul does, as Paul typically does, he anticipates those questions. And what he'll do is, he will up front, before they even ask the question, he'll say, okay, let me address this before you ask.

So that's what he does in chapter 7, verses 1 through 6. He uses an analogy from marriage to show how death releases a person from the dominion of something.

[7:23] What happened to the law when we trusted Christ as our Savior? We came into a brand new relationship with Christ. Now, Paul's not trashing the law.

Paul's not saying the law was bad. Paul's not saying God did a mistake or God made a mistake when He gave the law. No, not at all. The law served a purpose.

But Paul's saying that old relationship, you've been released from that law, and now we are united in a new relationship, in a new marriage, so to speak.

He's showing that the law served a purpose, but that purpose has been fulfilled. Jesus Christ fulfilled all the demands of the law. And that's what makes it good, that's what makes it right, and that's what makes it possible for us to be released from the law.

Because now we live under a new law. We live under the law of grace rather than the Mosaic law. And now through that union in Jesus Christ, we've entered into a relationship far better than the Jews ever had in the Old Testament.

[8:32] Something happened to the cross that changed our legal standing, our legal standing with God. And until a person understands what happens, what will they do?

They'll keep trying to live under the old system. And that's what many Christians do. They inadvertently try to live under the old system. Well, if I'm going to please God, then I need to live according to these standards.

I need to live according to these strict standards of the Old Testament. Or at least under a standard of whatever rules that they come up with.

So let's look back at verses 1 through 3. See, they keep failing under the weight of a system that was never designed to save them. Verse 1 says, Or do you not know, brethren, for I speak to those who know the law, that the law has dominion over man as long as he lives.

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress.

[9:45] But if her husband dies, she is free from the law so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man. So we need to understand that the law's authority over us has ended.

It no longer has authority over us. So Paul opens up with a phrase we've seen before. He says, Or do you not know? Do you not know?

That comes from a word from which we get our English word agnostic. So he says, Don't you know this? Are you ignorant?

Are you unaware of the fact that once we died with Jesus Christ, we were released from the law? We were released, so now we're free to be married to another, so to speak.

He's not condescending. What he's doing is he's pointing out that many believers were still living under bondage to an old system, rather than allowed to be free to live a life based on grace, and to please God based on that grace and the power that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives, simply because they didn't understand what happened.

[10:59] They were still trying to live under the Old Testament system. He says, The law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. The word dominion is from that word kurios, lord, and the same word that Paul used earlier, a little bit earlier in verse 9, when he said the law no longer has dominion over you.

It no longer has rule over you. And what Paul's doing is Paul's establishing a principle that everyone in the room should understand, that the law has jurisdiction over a person only as long as that person lives.

So, let's take the job analogy we used a few weeks ago. So, okay, let's say you die, and the next day you don't have to show up at work.

Why? Because you're dead. You've been released as an employee, so to speak. And so what Paul's saying is, he's making the analogy that once you died with Christ, you are separated from that responsibility, you are separated from that law.

When a person dies, the law's authority over that person is terminated. So, to illustrate, the Apostle Paul used the idea of a marriage.

[12:24] A married woman, he says, is bound to her husband. That's a very, very strong word. It describes a legal and a covenantal bond.

As long as her husband lives, she's legally tied to him. If she takes up with another man while she's still married to this man, he says she'll be called an adulteress, a woman who violates her marriage covenant because she is still bound to him by marriage.

But if the husband dies, he said everything changes. She is released from the law of her husband. And that Greek word for released, same word Paul used earlier, is rendered inoperative.

So the law no longer works, if you will. It's no longer operative in our lives. Because now we are under grace. So Paul used it back in verse 6 when he said that our old person, the old us, was crucified with Christ.

And it was destroyed or rendered inoperative. Same word here. The law of marriage still exists. The law of marriage wasn't done away with at the cross.

[13:41] But what Paul is saying is, it no longer has an effect on this person. The law no longer has an effect on this person because this person died with Christ.

The law of marriage still exists. It just no longer applies to this person because death intervened. Death got in the way of that. So do we see the principle? Death breaks the legal bond.

So death broke the legal bond to the law. Now there are still people today who have trusted Christ as their Savior, call themselves a follower of Jesus Christ, and they're still trying to live as an Old Testament Jew.

Now there's no reason why, let me say this, there's no reason why we could not keep the Old Testament feast. There's no reason why we can't, but we're not bound to do it.

So that's the difference. But there are some believers today who try to live like Jews and think that they're bound, still bound to the Old Testament law.

[14:51] Well, what Paul says is, that's wrong. That's not the case. Because what you're doing is, you are in the flesh trying to do something that you were never expected to do.

Yes, it was given as a mirror to show how sinful we were, but the law never gave us the power to do right. Jesus Christ can, and Jesus Christ does.

So Paul is not giving a marriage seminar. It's not a treatise on marriage. He's just simply using it as an analogy. And here's the point, is you were once bound to the law, you died with Jesus Christ, you are no longer bound to the law.

The law no longer has dominion over you. The law pointed out your failures. Every day you woke up, the law said, you're not good enough. This is where you fail. You always fail.

And you need someone. You need a Savior. You need the Messiah. So as long as you were alive to that system, you were stuck in it. But you could never measure up.

[15:52] But then something happened. Jesus died on the cross in our place. Death intervened. Not the law's death, but our death. So here's the first thing that we need to remember, is understand the law's authority over us has ended.

This is going to make a difference as we go through. Many Christians, many followers of Christ, are living like the old marriage is still intact.

They wake up every morning, and the first voice they hear is, you need to do this, you need to do more, you need to try harder, you need to do this, you need to do that.

You're not getting any better. You are failing. And sometimes we assume that's God's voice. You know what? You need to try harder. You need to do better. That's not God's voice.

That's the voice of the law. And we need to remember that we're now under the law of grace. What should the prayer we pray? Rather than, you need to try harder. Holy Spirit, give me the power to please you today.

[16:54] Because it's not I that live. Nevertheless, it's Christ that lives in me. And that's the voice of the old system. If we're in Christ, that contract has been terminated.

And here's the thing that not many people, that many people fail to remember is, we're no longer under a performance-based system. The Old Testament was a performance-based system.

The New Testament, the New Covenant is, Jesus Christ is living through us, living in us. And it's by grace through faith, and by every day we live.

So this week we need to ask ourselves, am I living like I've been released from the law? Am I still trying to live the Christian life in my power, in my strength?

There are many who do that. We try to work up the courage to do something. Or we try to live the Christian life by willpower. That does not work.

[17:54] Because it doesn't work for long. We need to be relying on Him. So first of all, understand that the law's authority over us has ended. Now let's look at verse 4.

This is the turning point of the passage, I believe. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

He says, you become dead to the law through the body of Christ. He says, now we can embrace our new union with Jesus Christ. We're no longer married to the law.

Now we are in a relationship with Jesus Christ. And the phrase become dead means to put to death or to make dead. And it's in the passive voice.

It's not something we do to ourselves. It's something that's been done to us. We were identified with Jesus Christ on the cross. It's not something we did ourselves. We didn't kill ourselves.

[18:57] We were made dead, if you will, with respect to sin. And our old person was put to death on the cross of Calvary. And through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, we died with respect to the law.

It's no longer our master. Jesus bore the full penalty of the law in himself on his body on the cross. So he took it all.

Every demand of the law was satisfied in Jesus Christ. And that's why you and I can live a brand new life, no longer being under the penalty of sin.

When Jesus died, our obligation to the law died as well. But Paul doesn't stop at death. You know, it's not good enough just that we died with Christ. He said, because in God's economy, death always leads to life.

We are separated from this body to a new life with him in heaven. The old body of sin has been put to death. Why? So that we can be raised to a brand new life.

[19:58] We are a new creation. And the word married here means to become. It's from the word from to begin.

Amen. It's a new state of existence. You didn't just leave one marriage. You entered into another one. And notice who the husband is.

The one who died for us. The new relationship is with Jesus Christ. He's not one who points out our failures every single day when we get up.

He's one that says, here, let me give you the power to do better. He's not always pointing out our faults. Because when God looks at us, what does he see?

You can talk to me this morning. When God looks at us, if you are in Christ, if you've trusted Christ as your Savior, when God looks at us, what does he see?

[20:57] Exactly. He sees the righteousness of Christ. It's been put to our account. He says he'll separate our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. Now, we can grieve the Holy Spirit when we sin.

He is hurt. And he wants that relationship. He wants that fellowship, if you will, to be restored. But when he looks on us, he sees the blood of Jesus Christ.

He sees what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary for us. So God's not always pointing his finger at us. Very many have the idea of a God sitting up in heaven that's just waiting to, you know, like whack a mole.

Just whack us over the head when we do wrong. That's not the way God operates according to Scripture. He loves us. He's long-suffering. He wants us to confess when we sin.

But he'll give us a chance, and his Holy Spirit will draw us back to him. The old relationship was based on performance. The new relationship is one based on relationship.

[22:00] It's based on being with him. And then what does he say that we go on to do? What does he say at the end of verse 4?

That we will bear fruit. Remember what Paul said a few verses ago? The old life, under the old system, under the system of sin, what does sin, what's the, in sin's economy, how does sin give you your paycheck?

Your paycheck is death. But in the new economy, God doesn't work that way. It's life. And he says, under the old economy of sin, you bore fruit.

But the fruit was what we were ashamed of. It was rotten fruit. It was death fruit. But once we are united with Jesus Christ, like you unite a branch to the vine, now you can bear good fruit.

But it's because of your relationship with the vine. We have a relationship with Jesus Christ. This, the old relationship produced the fruit of guilt.

[23:13] The new relationship produces good fruit. So that's exactly what Paul says. We should be bearing fruit to God. This is the language of agriculture. Remember Jesus said, I'm the vine, you're the branches.

He used that terminology quite a bit. And it's not something that we just strain. A branch doesn't just strain to produce fruit, and then all of a sudden fruit pops out. Where does the fruit come from?

It comes from the life of the vine. And we're the same way. He's the one that produces that fruit in us. Under the old system, the only crop we could ever produce was failure.

But under the new system, the Holy Spirit works through us. Jesus is the vine, and we can bear fruit for Him. What's the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace, goodness.

All of this, this is the fruit that the Holy Spirit can produce in our lives. Kindness, and that kind of character can only come, that kind of true character can only come from being connected to the living vine.

[24:19] Jesus Himself said it, as we said in John 15, verse 5, I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me, you can do nothing.

And fruit isn't something we just manufacture through our own effort. We have to stay connected to Jesus Christ in order for our life to produce good fruit. So first, we understand that our relationship with the law was terminated when Jesus Christ died on the cross, when we chose Christ as our Savior.

We died with Christ. So death breaks that connection. And then secondly, what we need to do is embrace our new union with Christ. It's not enough to be dead to the law, or not under the dominion of the law.

We now need to be in the relationship with Jesus Christ. See, some people are still acting like they're single spiritually. You know what?

I died with respect to the law. I died to sin. But they don't unite themselves with Jesus Christ. It's like they're living single. I can do whatever I want to. And I'm free.

[25:29] I can do whatever I want to. I don't have to be under anyone's thumb. But it's not that we're under the thumb of Jesus Christ. We're in a new relationship where He gives us everything we need.

He lavishes His love upon us. And by His grace, we have a relationship that, I mean, that's literally out of this world.

So I think what Paul is saying is, why would you want to go back to the old system? That every day you woke up, it says you're not good enough. Unite yourself with the One who loves you, gave Himself for you, and will lavish His love upon you.

And by His grace, He will give you whatever you need. See, we're not free to do anything we want. We're free to be fruitful to Him. We're no longer under the old system.

We are related now to Jesus Christ. So this week we can ask ourselves, am I really connected to Jesus? Am I talking to Him? Am I walking with Him? Am I spending time in His Word?

[26:31] Am I doing what God's called me to do? Am I using my spiritual gifts? So that all flows out of our connection and our union with Jesus Christ.

So freedom from something is only half the story. Now we're free for something, for living a thriving, fruit-bearing life in Jesus Christ.

So we need to stop trying to produce fruit on our own. Stop trying to work out your own Christian life. Do it with Him. Allow the Holy Spirit to work that through you.

Surrender to Him. Let's surrender to Him before the day starts. Before your feet hit the floor, don't grab your phone. Before your feet hit the floor, talk to Him.

And just surrender to Him. Say, Lord, I'm Yours today. And use me however You choose. The fruit will come, not because we try harder, but because we stay connected.

[27:33] So embrace our new union with Jesus Christ. Now let's move on to verses 5 and 6. For when we were in the flesh, so Paul is going back again, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

Now you might be thinking to yourself, you mean the law made it worse? The law aroused? Our sinful passions were aroused by the law? But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

We were freed to serve in the power of the Spirit, not under the pressure of the law. We don't have to perform anymore. We do it because we want to. Think about a good relationship, a good marriage relationship.

You love one another, and you want to please the other, and it's not like, well, I guess I have to give you a hug.

No, I do it because I want to. I do it because I love you. I do it because I enjoy it. You know, we don't have to do kind things to your spouse because you have to.

[28:46] You're not under pressure to. I mean, they may pressure you to, but we do it because we want to. We do it because it brings us joy, and that's the relationship we can have with Jesus Christ.

I've heard people say, well, you know what? I guess I've got to go to church. You know what? I guess I've got to do this. I've got to do that. A new relationship with Jesus Christ is going to bring a brand new want to, and it's not because I got to.

It's because I want to. So we are under the, we're freed to serve in the power of the Spirit, not under the pressure of the law. And so what Paul does, he gives us a before and after picture.

Y'all have seen those in magazines? The before picture, the after picture. So Paul is giving us the picture of what we looked like before. He says, we were in the flesh. That word for flesh is the word, Greek word sarx, and he uses not just for the physical, but for the, the, the old, everything that's, that was old person about us.

Talk to, we talking about a Christian being in the flesh. All that means is we're just going back and living according to our old passions, our old sinful passions. So we're in the flesh, if you will.

[30:00] It refers to that old, unregenerate nature, the old man that Paul calls. When we were in the flesh, or when we are in the flesh, we're operating under the old system.

And Paul says something shocking about, I believe, the, the system. He says, the law actually aroused our sinful passions. That word aroused is from the Greek word energeo, and we get the word energy from it.

It, the old, the old law, what the law did was it energized our sinful passions. And you say, well, that doesn't make sense. Why would the law do that? Remember, was it week last week, week before last, the wet paint, do not touch sign.

If the sign were not there, I pretty well guarantee you that when you're walking down the hallway, everything within you would not have said, I just want to touch that wall. Right? No, you just walk down the hallway, but you put, but somebody put up a sign, wet paint, do not touch.

All of a sudden, something in you is going to be aroused and says, I want to touch it. Right? Well, so what the law did, what the sign did was a sign, energized something inside you that says, I wonder if it really is still wet.

[31:18] And that's what the law did. That's what he says. That's what he says. The law does. It stirred it up. It stirred up the old passions. But the moment the sign appeared, we want to do something.

That's what the law does. It tells you what's wrong. And something inside your fallen nature says, I want to try that.

And that's what exactly what the law does. So what did this produce? It produced a fruit to death. Death. The wages of sin is death. But that word now, he said he used, Paul uses, but now in verse number six, it's an emphatic form of the word now.

It means like right now. Paul says, we have been delivered from the law. And it's the same word that he used for the woman is released from the law.

The death of her husband has been discharged, rendered inoperative. Why? Because we died to what we were held by the law. The law held us down.

[32:27] The law restrained. And we continued in a cycle of failure. Now, people were still moral in the Old Testament. They were just shown by the law that they weren't good enough to please God on their own.

So here's the purpose. So that we serve in the newness of the spirit, not under the oldness of the law. So Paul isn't saying we've been free from all service.

God doesn't free us once we trust Christ just to kind of flow along. No, he frees us to serve him, but he gives us the power to do it.

Now we serve in the newness of the spirit. That newness of life, that newness of spirit, the word that he used, it's not just new in time. You know, we say something is new to us.

It could be a used car, but it's new to us. It's new in time. But this word is a newness in quality. It's a different kind of life.

[33:30] It's a brand new type of life. It's not the old operating system. It's a new operating system that we're working under now.

It's a law the Holy Spirit's riding on our heart, that God's riding on our heart through the Holy Spirit. Living under the power of the Holy Spirit versus living under the law would be like the difference between pushing a car and driving a car.

In the Old Testament, you were pushing the car. You were trying to live based upon the law. You were trying to fulfill the requirements of the law.

So it was always an uphill battle to try to be, to try to live according to the law. But when Jesus Christ came and died on the cross, we died from the law.

We were released from the law's dominion. And now we are under a new system, Jesus Christ. And the Bible says, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside all those who trust Christ as their Savior.

[34:42] So now, instead of pushing the car, trying to live a good life, turn the key, starts the engine. What's the engine? The Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives us the power. So there's a difference between pushing a car and driving a car. And so when we become a follower of Jesus Christ, it's really not work anymore.

It's loving Him and everything that He does empowers us and it brings a brand new joy. And we're not working to live the Christian life.

We're living the Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit. I am crucified with Christ. Therefore, I live, yet not I, but I live by the faith of the Son of God. So it is Jesus Christ living His life through us. Warren Wiersbe says it this way, the law was an external thing written on the tablets of stone. The Spirit is an internal power working in the heart. The law could command, but it could not enable.

[35:42] The Spirit empowers us to obey from the inside out. So here's the third thing we can do now that we're free. Serve in the power of the Spirit, not under the pressure of the law.

So sin, the law no longer has power over us. It, when we died with Christ, we were freed from the dominion of the law.

We were freed from the demands of the law. Now we're free to enter into a new relationship with Jesus Christ. And then he says, every day, you're free to serve in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is where a lot of believers get stuck. They know they're saved by grace. They know they're not under the law, but when it comes to daily living, they go right back to that old system.

Well, I've got to do this. I have to do this. And I have to do this. And they try to work up the discipline, not a sheer determination, try to live the Christian life. Well, that's the wrong way to live the Christian life.

[36:45] We live it in the power of God's Holy Spirit. Almost like they feel like they're going back to that old marriage. That's not how the Christian life works. The Christian life is not about relying, it's not about trying harder, it's about relying on the Holy Spirit.

It's about internal power. So this week, we stopped trying. We stopped trying by working harder. We just let the Holy Spirit do the work.

We can stop, take a breath, and breathe a prayer like, Holy Spirit, I can't do this on my own. I ask right now, you give me the power to forgive this person.

I ask right now that you give me the strength to live for you today. I ask right now that you give me the power to say no to this temptation in my life.

Don't just work up the willpower to say no. Rely on the power that's available to you. Turn the key. Say, Lord, I can't do this.

[37:46] I need you to do it through me. That's how we live the Christian life. So, because the one who died, the one who rose from the dead, is the same one that lives in us today.

And he is more than enough for you and me. Let's pray. Father, we come to you this morning. We thank you. We thank you for being such a good God. We thank you, Father, that you gave us a brand new system to live under.

You freed us to be able to live in a relationship with you, a relationship where you love us, where you care for us, where you lavish your love upon us, you lavish your gifts upon us.

And, Father, we pray that we might live a life that says thank you. And, Father, a life that we give glory and honor to you every single day that we live, that we live a thank you life.

Father, this morning, if there's anyone hearing these words that is exhausted because they've been trying to live the Christian life under their own power, under their own steam, we pray, Father, that they truly can be released.

[38:59] from that trying to live the Christian life through sheer determination and would simply allow you to live your life through them.

