

ROMANS, RIGHTLY DIVIDED & VERSE-BY-VERSE
SESSION 17 | ROMANS 7:1-8

ROMANS 5:12-8:39 | GIVING TESTIMONY TO THE VALIDITY OF THE
MYSTERY

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ROMANS 7:1-25 | DEAD UNTO THE LAW

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VERSE 1 – BLACK

In Romans 7 Paul devotes an entire chapter speaking to his Jewish **brethren** about the Law and its **dominion**. I am interpreting this entire chapter to have its direct application to Jewish believers, though there are aspects of it which would have some incidental application to those of us who were never under the law. Namely, we are *free from the Law*, but, unlike those in Paul's audience, we *always have been*.

When Paul says, **I speak to them that know the law**, he uses the word γινώσκω [ginosko], which is an *experiential knowledge* rather than an *intellectual knowledge*. For believers today, our *knowledge* of the Law is through reading, not through life-experience.

Paul gives the premise of his argument in verse 1, which is that **the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth**. He will develop this premise in the following verses.

It would be unfair to say that these verses apply directly to us since Paul is talking about civil law rather than Torah law. It is arguable whether this is the case at all, but even if it is the case, his *point*, given in part by illustration, has nothing to do with civil law and everything to do with Torah law.

VERSES 2-3 – BLACK

Paul's premise is in verse 1 and supporting illustration in verses 2-3. He specifically chooses an instance in which an individual *still living* was once under the law and is now free from that law. This illustration serves his need to convince the Jewish people that *freedom from the Law under Christ is not out of the question*.

VERSE 3 – BLACK

Continuing the illustration, Paul states that a woman who marries another man after her husband is dead she is not **an adulteress**, but she would be if her husband was still alive.

The Roman Government had adultery laws and it is possible that he makes reference to Roman law. However, no position should be built upon this premise because Roman law changed drastically over the 1,000 year period of the empire's existence, and much of Roman adultery law is simply not known. And, as stated in our note on verse 1, Paul's *message* is not about Roman marriage and adultery laws. Rather, this is an illustration to support his premise.

VERSE 4 – BLACK

Paul makes the claim that his Jewish **brethren** have **become dead to the law**. First, let's consider the verb tense translated **are become dead**, which is an unusual construction of English words. The verb is in the aorist passive indicative. The aorist is a *point-in-time* tense and can be past, present, or future. The most common translation is past tense, and this is what is used by the modern translations. Doing so, however, makes the issue of *becoming dead to the law* to have taken place *at the crucifixion*, and no such thing happened! Consider Peter's ministry in Acts 1-10, in which he was obedient to the law in every

regard. I think it is much better to use the King James verbiage of **are become dead**, giving indication that this has happened in more recent days.

This **death to the law** came about **by the body of Christ**. Here, the reference is not to the Pauline assembly, but rather to the physical body of Christ on the cross. Compare Colossians 1:22, as opposed to Ephesians 2:16.

By the physical life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the believers have now **become dead to the law** and are now (or soon will be) **married to another**, the same One whose work gave them freedom from the law. Note that the verb **married** is also an aorist verb and none of the modern translations use the past tense in English, thus proving in the same verse that aorist does not require the past tense in English.

It is difficult to know whether the pronoun **we** at the end of the verse (as opposed to **ye** at the beginning, is in reference to Paul and his apostolic brethren or if he now includes the Jewish believing brethren as “part of the family” and thus changes pronouns. More than likely, Paul is using **we** to refer to himself and other Pauline believers who are now freed from the Law and living fruitful lives.

VERSE 5 – BLACK

Having once lived **in the flesh** (a spiritual, not physical reference), then the *ebb and flow of sins* brought forth **fruit unto death**. These sins were **by the law**. That is, *according to Torah it was a sin* but may not have been a sin for those who were not under the Law.

VERSE 6 – BLACK

Those who insist that the aorist should be past tense in verse 4 should notice that the aorist tense is also used in verse 6 in the verb translated **are delivered**. In fact, both verbs are aorist, passive, indicative.

Paul claims that he (and whomever is included in the pronoun **we**), now being **delivered from the law** should **serve in newness of spirit**. Notice that he does *not* say that he (and those with him) should *abandon the law* in practice, but only that their service should not be the kind field by **the oldness of the letter** of the law. Therefore, the issue here being *motivation* and not *practice*. To argue otherwise would put Paul in conflict with Paul, for he clearly instructed Gentiles to avoid the legalisms of the Law, but he went out of his way to show that *he taught no such thing for the Jews*. See Acts 21:20-24 for a prime example.

VERSE 7 - BLACK

Since Paul is teaching that the Law should not be the motivation for service, then someone would ask the question, **Is the law sin?** Of course, Paul answers with a strong denial, **God forbid**. He then enters a discussion in verses 7-12 of the *value* of the Law, though it will seem at times that he is condemning the Law (verse 12 proves otherwise).

The chief value of the Law is that it *taught what was sin and what was not*. Paul uses the example of coveting, which does not seem *inherently sinful* but is declared to be so in the Law.

VERSE 8 – BLACK

Paul personifies **sin**, displaying its tendency to *take on a life of its own*. Not knowing that coveting was a sin, it was not a huge problem. But then when he heard **thou shalt not covet** (v. 7), he suddenly began to have **all manner of concupiscence**.

The word **concupiscence** means *a vehement desire*. In fact, the words **lust** (v. 7), **covet** (v. 7), and **concupiscence** (v. 8) are all from the same Greek root word, επιθυμew [epithumeo], which is *to covet*.