

lincolnberean

DATE: April 19, 2026
SERIES: The Gospel Is
MESSAGE: Union with Christ
PASSAGE: Romans 7:1-6
SPEAKER: Ryan Harmon

Death changes things. How's that for an obvious statement here this morning? Death changes things. Now, of course, if it's the death of a loved one, a family member, that change is a profound change. But I think even on those deaths that are little, those endings that are less significant, they still change things. If your plant dies, no obligation to water it, that's a new day. If your goldfish dies, there's no need to buy food, you're now free of that. Death brings an end to old obligations, and while we are quick to miss it, death opens up brand new possibilities.

Now, throughout Romans, we have said again and again, particularly in these last few chapters, that we through Christ, through faith, have died. Paul said, you have died and death changes things. Death brings an end to old obligations and opens us up to brand new possibilities. That's what we want to consider this morning. Open your bibles with me to Romans chapter 7. We're going to be in verses 1 to 6 this morning, just a brief look at these words because we get to celebrate baptism this morning. But in chapter 7, Paul is going to bring into focus and explore something that he mentioned very briefly in the passage that we looked at last week. In Romans 6, verse 14, Paul said this. He said, "for sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace." Sin shall not be master over you. Tyce reminded us that the gospel is freedom to choose the better master. Jesus is the master, and then Paul added this small little phrase loaded with meaning, "for you are not under law, but under grace."

It's a simple of enough idea, but the implications for us are massive. Here's what this means for us as Christians: if you have placed your faith in Christ, you are no longer under obligation or the power of the law, you are now under grace. Now, that is a significant statement, and that is going to be the focus for Paul for the rest of chapter 7. And here, as we begin in these first 6 verses, he is going to explore how and why that is true. So in verse one of chapter 7, Paul says this, he says:

1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives.

So two quick things to note here in this first verse. The first is that Paul understands that his audience knows the law, even though they may primarily be gentile Christians. They are very familiar with the law of God, the law of Moses, and they understand that the law was the governing principle over the people of God for 1500 years. They knew the law, they were familiar with it. As he continues, then, the second thing we need to take note of is that he begins to draw out the implications of the believer's relationship now to the law. He says that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives. So that is a general principle that I think we can agree, as we consider it, that it is true.

Now, in talking about the Mosaic law, which is clearly what Paul most of the time is referring to when he says this word law, the mosaic law has jurisdiction—it has power, it has authority—over the living, not over the dead. Now that is fairly clear and simple, isn't it? Someone in the grave is not considering whether or not they have obeyed all the commands of the Lord. The law has



lincolnberean

jurisdiction, it has power, it rules over, those who are living. Even when we talk about laws of local governments, that principle remains true. If tomorrow, the city of Lincoln would enact some new law, we all know they would not then drive through the cemeteries and decide whether they should convict those who have died. Wouldn't apply to them, because law applies to the living. Law has jurisdiction over those who are alive. That is a simple idea. Not really debatable.

So now, as Paul continues, he is going to illustrate this idea with an analogy. He says in verse 2:

2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. 3 So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man [she marries someone else], she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man."

Pretty simple analogy. As long as a woman or—as anyone, a spouse—as long as someone is in marriage, and the partner is living, there are requirements, there are obligations to faithfulness. To join together with another person in the analogy, another man, to marry someone else, is adultery. But if the other spouse dies, then the marriage is dissolved, it doesn't exist any longer. Therefore, that woman is no longer bound and she is now free to enter into something new.

The general principle, then, is that when it comes to the authority of the law, death changes things. Death changes things. In the analogy, the death of the husband released the woman from the prior obligations that came with that old marriage and then freed her up for new possibilities. A new marriage. Remarriage. That's the analogy. Pretty simple. But what's the point?

We need to remember that what Paul is exploring here is how it could be true that we as Christians, those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ, are no longer under the law. So as he continues, he is now going to move to an application, a theological application, of the analogy we just read. So verse 4, he continues, he says:

4 Therefore [so here's the application, therefore, therefore], my brethren, you also were made to die to the law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Paul is saying that, in the same way that the husband's death freed the woman to marry another, so also we as Christians have been freed from the responsibilities and obligations that were true while we were under the law. How did that happen? It happened through death. It happened through death. Death changes things, and Paul just said, you also were made to die to the law through the body of Christ. Former obligations have come to an end.

Now, this should come as no surprise to us because just a few weeks ago, if you were here on Easter Sunday, we made a public announcement of the death of your old self. Paul's made it abundantly clear, in Christ, you have died. Isn't it nice to have that out of the way? Took care of that. You have died. Your old self has died. The part of you that was in Adam, through faith, has been joined together with Christ in his death, and now lives in newness of life. Therefore, you no longer live under the reign of sin and death. We have died, and we have been brought into something brand new, something far superior.

To use the language of the analogy, we have died, therefore the old marriage has come to an end, and that means we are now free to enter into a brand new union, a new marriage. While we were married, we were united to Adam, we now died to that marriage, died to that life, so that we could enter in to a brand new union, remarriage—we have been joined together with Christ. Paul phrases



lincolnberEAN

it like this: we are joined to him who was raised from the dead. United. Entering into a new life. And God has clear purposes for our new life.

See, what is supposed to flow now, and what God intends to have flow out of this new marriage, this new union to Christ, is a brand new life within which we bear fruit to God. We bear fruit to God. That is, that which is pleasing to God will increasingly flow from us, not because we are producing anything in ourselves, but because of who we are united to. The new marriage. Joined together with Christ.

See, it's so critical that we understand we in ourselves are incapable of producing fruit that is honoring to God. We cannot bear fruit to God apart from our union with Christ. Now that is the good news of the gospel: we have been joined together with him. Apart from him, we actually did produce fruit, but it wasn't good fruit. That's what Paul's going to describe in verse 5, he says:

5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

To bear fruit for death. While we were in the flesh. That's Paul's word to sum up our life in Adam, our life in the old self. Rebellious. The life that sought to live without God, that's in the flesh, the system of the world, the system of sin. While we were in the flesh, Paul said, our sinful passions were aroused by the law. Isn't that fascinating? God's law came in and aroused, awakened, the sinful passions. I think if we just consider our life for a moment, we'll recognize the truth of that statement.

So often what happens in our own life is, we are told we cannot have something. And what happens? We desire it greatly. Begin to obsess over it. How dare someone say I can't have that! Starts early in life. If you have little kids, if you have toddlers, you know what happens. Four years old, they get very tired of their toys until their friend comes over and wants that toy, and suddenly that is the most precious toy on earth. Have to have it.

Our sinful passions. These desires that are illicit, that are contrary to God, they got stirred up, aroused, awakened, when God came in, and announced right from wrong. Sinful passions were aroused, and eventually then they gave birth to action, to rebellious living. Our sinful passions led to the birth of illicit actions that are contrary to God. As Paul says, we began and we were destined to bear fruit for death. Our old life bore fruit, but it wasn't fruit that glorified God. It was fruit that was rotten. Fruit for death.

To use the analogy, we were married, and that marriage was a bad marriage, and it bore bad fruit. All of it was leading to death, all of it was absolutely rotten, and the good news of the gospel is that we don't have to live in that marriage any longer. We have been brought into something brand new. That's what Paul tells us in verse 6, he says:

6 But now [but now] we have been released from the law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

"But now." I think those are my two favorite words in all of Romans. "But now," it's an announcement that God is doing something different. God has done something different in Christ. "But now," through faith we have been released. That's language of bondage, of captivity—we were captive under the law, but we've been released from that captivity. We are no longer under the power of the law, because death changes things. It ends old obligations and opens us up to brand new possibilities.



lincolnberean

It ends old obligations. That's just what Paul said. We have been released from the law, releases from the need to obsessively comb over our life and consider, have we perfectly kept it—this external word from God—wondering, did we measure up? Released, not under obligation to the law. Old obligations are gone. New possibilities. We have been, we are free now to serve in newness of the Spirit. That is the new possibility.

Now in the weeks to come, our attention is going to turn fully to the work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. But let it just be sufficient to say today, because Paul only mentions it here, that life in the Spirit isn't only new, it is far better. That word "newness" doesn't just mean new in terms of it's chronologically new, it also means "superior." It's fresh. There is a new moment that God has brought about in Christ, and it is no longer marked by the letters written on stone. It is now marked by the enlivening and empowering work of the Holy Spirit that has been poured out on you and on me if we have given our life to Christ in faith.

Death changes things. A release from old obligation, the possibility of stepping into what is brand new—the empowering life of the Spirit. When we turn to chapter 8, Paul will take us deep into the glorious reality of walking according to the Spirit that lives in us. But we're going to have to wait a couple weeks before our attention turns there.

This morning as we conclude, I want to take a few moments and just consider some practical applications from these six verses. I think you can agree with me that Romans is loaded with deep theological truth, but I think you probably also can agree that sometimes it's hard to figure out, what does that mean on a Monday? How do I apply this? And I think there are two clear applications for us to consider in the text today. I think in some way, they will impact everyone that's in this room.

So, Paul told us that because since we have been united with Christ, we are now free from the obligation and power of the law. As Christians, we no longer live under the law, but I think many of us as Christians struggle to believe and live as if that is so. We still live under the burden, the weight, of trying to make ourselves righteous in our own strength, somehow trying to impress God through our right action. And that is living under the mindset of the law. I want to be honest with you, this is a struggle for me. If I have a sin or an inclination that is one that I have to continually think about setting aside and trusting God with, it is this inclination towards self-righteousness. Because of that, I kind of like rules. I like law. Because law is clear. Super obvious. It gives me some measure, some feeling, of control. "Okay, if I just do all these things, then everything's right."

But we have to affirm also that law is deadening. It is a burden because no one, neither you nor I, will perfectly keep it. Therefore, we are never measuring up. Therefore, it is a deadening, cursed way to live, constantly bringing us under condemnation because we do not add up. We do not measure up. Therefore, the freedom that we now have in Christ is that through him, and through his work on the cross, we have been declared righteous and we no longer live under that mindset or under that obligation. We are free from the obligation to the law. So if you this morning are the kind of person that is inclined to obsess over these things, I want to ask you whether you are still living under the mindset of the law. And if that is you, I wonder if tomorrow morning, or as you leave today, whether you might commit to bringing that inclination to self-righteousness directly to Jesus and to ask him to help you understand that you are now free. You are now free from the burden, you are free from the obligation to the law.

That's some of us. But I think there's another set of people in this room. And the second point of application, the second implication from this truth, affects that half of the room. We are free from obligation to the law, but it is also true that since we have been joined together with Christ, we are now free to serve in the newness of the Spirit. See, some people here, we are free from the law and what they think is, "All right, It's party time! Let's go! Let's live it up! No more rules!" But that is



lincolnberEAN

to misunderstand what Paul is saying. The freedom that we have in Christ, the freedom of this new union, is that we are not only freed “from” something, we are freed “to” something. We are free to step into a brand new life of service to God, of bearing fruit to God, in the newness of the Spirit. And it’s far superior. We are free to serve, free to serve the one that we have been united to. And so if you are inclined to think all bets are off, no rules, let’s party, my question for you on Monday is whether or not you can bring your inclination to live according to your own pleasure and desire to do whatever you want, and say to Jesus, “Lord, help me understand I’ve been brought into something better. Help me understand that I have been brought into newness of life in the Spirit. And help me to understand serving you in the Spirit is far superior to living on my own.”

Death changes things. It releases us from old obligations. We have died to sin. We have died to the law. And it brings us into brand new possibilities. We are now alive to Christ, joined together with him, free to walk in the newness of the Spirit, free to bear fruit to God. All of it possible because of the truth of the gospel. Because in the gospel, we have been joined together with Jesus Christ. The gospel, it is union with our Lord and Savior, union together with Christ.

Our Father, we thank you this morning that in Christ you did what we could not do. You brought to an end what was old, and you have freed us to step into what is brand new. Lord Jesus, we ask that you will help us, by the power of the Spirit, to understand we are free from prior obligations of the old life, and we are now free to step fully in to life guided by, empowered by, your very Spirit. Lord, we ask that you will help us to understand it and to live it out this week. We pray these things in your name, amen.

*Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988, 1995
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.*

Copyright 2026 Lincoln Berean Church. All rights reserved.

