

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 7:1-4

- **Preliminary Considerations:**

The address: “brothers and sisters” -- an affectionate tone to his message.

“Don’t you know” – a question repeated throughout chapter 6 and carried over into chapter 7. The new question: Their understanding of the limited jurisdiction of the law.

The dominant theme of the paragraph: The possibility of being released from the Mosaic Law. Paul uses the phrase, “released from the law” three times – in verses, 2, 3, and 6. He uses the word “Law” in every verse.

- **The Legal Axiom:**

The Law has authority over a human – in this case a member of covenant Israel – as long as he or she is living.

Greek word for “has authority” – “kyrieuo” -- the absolute and unbending power or authority of the state over someone’s life – for a lifetime.”. See: Mark 10:42

A Parallel: Two Slaverys and the Authority of the Law:

- Compulsory Slavery – the slavery of all humans to the powers of Sin and Death.
- Voluntary slavery – the bondsman and his ritual.

A “Jesus-type” question: “The authority of the Mosaic Law – was it compulsory or voluntary?”

Exodus 24:

Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up

twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

Moses has carefully explained the requirements of the new written code to Israel. After sprinkling sacrificial blood on them and the altar what do they say? "We will obey".

That's actually the second time the people have said, "We will obey". Once they were sprinkled with the blood and said, "We will obey" it became compulsory.

The larger point: No matter at what point you became "A Son of the Law", it stuck for the rest of your life. What is the only thing that could break that power? It's death.

When someone dies, all of their personal, contractual obligations cease – at least as far as the deceased is concerned. In that sense, we can say that death releases the dead person from all contractual obligations.

- **The Marriage Illustration**

To illustrate how the Mosaic Law only applies to those who are living under its obligations, he talks about marriage and the death of a husband.

Paul's primary intention wasn't to give an in depth teaching on marriage and remarriage. He's illustrating the Law's authority.

Look at verse 2: "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 that binds her to him."

The Greek word for "married woman" is very descriptive. It's the word, "hupandros" – which literally means, "under a man".

Now that's interesting because Paul has just asked us if we understand that "the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?" In the first case, the Mosaic Law is over humans and humans are under Law.

There are two things here: 1. A woman is under a husband. 2. A woman is bound to her husband. (You might say she is stuck with him).

While a woman is married to a man she is under an ongoing legal obligation as his wife. Under the Old Testament regulations a wife was “bound” to her husband.

The Greek here strongly emphasizes that she has a permanent bond to her husband; there is no view for a release from him.

The next question: “How could a woman come out from under her husband’s authority?” Verse 2: “... But if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.”

Another translation: “But if her husband dies, she is discharged (“Katargeo”), from the marriage law of her husband.” “Katargeo” -- to annul or destroy.

Paul’s meaning is that, upon the husband’s death, a wife’s covenant and binding obligations are completely eliminated: When your spouse dies – legally you are no longer a husband or a wife.

- **The Violation of Law: V. 3**

“So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress.”

Now why did he have to add that? In the most Biblical sense, to have sexual relations with another man is to come under his care and authority as well.

Genesis 29:23: “But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her.”

Jacob’s father-in-law deceived him and he had to work seven years to marry Rachel as well. The point: When Jacob took Leah into the tent – and had relations with her – she became his wife.

That’s why when a woman under the Mosaic Covenant had sex with a second man – one she was not married to – the Old Testament Law

identified her as an adulteress. **Paul's point:** A woman can only be legally identified as the wife of one man.

Paul's next point: "But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man."

With that statement, Paul has paved the way for his discussion on how New Testament believers relate to the Old Testament Code.

We will see that next time.