

The Dominion Of Law

"Or are ye ignorant brethren, (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth?" (Rom. 7:1). This statement is tied to Paul's conclusion in the former chapter: *"the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). Sin is a transgression of the law (1 Jn. 3:4). Since all have sinned and since the wages of sin is death, these Romans (and we) had reached the point where "law" could do no more for them for the weakness of the law is found in that the law kills but the law cannot make alive (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Gal. 3:21). For one who has violated law, law cannot -- of itself -- overrule its own verdict: "Guilty -- thus death!" *"The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law"* (1 Cor. 15:56).

In understanding Paul's statement regarding the dominion of law, consider three items. FIRST, it is a general truth that law has dominion over a man while he lives, after he is dead law can do nothing more to him. SECOND, Paul illustrates this truth by marriage and *"the law of the husband."* *"The woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband"* (Rom. 7:2). Verse three is Paul's explanation of this statement: *"So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die; she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man."* This passage states God's original intent for marriage: one man, one woman together as long as both live. If either woman or man who has been joined in marriage, subsequently marries another while the first mate still lives, such an one is constituted an adulteress (adulterer). And, just as long as they remain in that state, such an one is judged to be an adulteress or adulterer, because of the law of the husband is: *"So then, if while they first husband liveth she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress."*

May we pause here that we might sound a word of caution. Keep in mind that the general truth, *"Law has dominion over a man as long time as he liveth,"* has been expostulated. The writer's purpose in writing is not to set forth an extended discussion of marriage, divorce and remarriage. His intent deals with the dominion of law, illustrated by the marriage union. To have turned aside to deal with God's single exception to God's rule would have weakened the force of his argument. Nevertheless, because some fail to see the flow in the apostle's arguments (thereby concluding that death is the only cause which allows one party in a marriage union to remarry), it is must be stated that Paul does not deal with the exception Jesus give to divorce and remarriage. However, the fact that he does not, does not negate

what Jesus said: *"Whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication and shall marry another, committeth adultery and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery"* (Mt. 19:9; 5:32).

Paul's illustration of *"the law of the husband"* is just that: an illustration. His presentation of that law is to illustrate the significance of his earlier statement: *"Law has dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth."* The law which Paul has in mind (with its dominion) is the law Moses gave. Paul was speaking to and for men *"who know the law,"* brethren, Jews. His application of *"Law has dominion over a man while he liveth"* is *"Wherefore my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law, through the body of Christ that ye should be joined to another, even to him that hath been raised from the dead"* (Rom. 7:4). This fact is item number THREE in our understanding of the significance to his statement: *"Law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth."* NEXT: *"Dead To The Law."*

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