




# Bound to Christ Forever Free

*The Liberating Truth from Romans 6–7*

*"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin."*

— Romans 6:6–7

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## Our Victory Is in the Past Tense

Our old sinful self was crucified with Christ. Notice that this is in the past tense. We are not looking to overcome sin in the future—we have already overcome through the truth of the gospel. Our body of sin was crucified, not on our own, but **with Christ**. Every aspect of our deliverance is associated with and included in Christ and what Christ did. When we survey the work of the cross and see how complete it was, we should also see at that moment how complete our death to sin was. This is the only reason we can be free from sin—because Jesus destroyed the body of sin.

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

— Galatians 2:20

### The Greek Word: *Katargeo* (καταργέω)

The word translated "destroyed" or "done away with" in Romans 6:6 is the Greek word ***katargeo*** (καταργέω), Strong's #2673. This word is derived from *kata* (κατά), meaning "down" or "against," and *argeo* (ἀργέω), meaning "to be idle" or "to work." Together, the word means to render entirely idle, to make completely inoperative, to deprive a thing of the power for which it was intended.

This word does not simply mean to annihilate or make something cease to exist. Rather, it means to render powerless, to strip of authority, to make of no effect. Think of it this way: ***katargeo*** is like pulling the teeth out of a lion, or declawing a predator. The creature still exists, but it has lost its power to harm you. This is exactly what Christ did to sin on the cross—He did not simply cover it or temporarily restrain it. He rendered the body of sin powerless. He stripped sin of its controlling authority over the believer.

It is remarkable that this same word *katargeo* is used in Hebrews 2:14, where we are told that through His death, Christ rendered powerless "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." The same word used to describe what happened to the body of sin is used to describe what happened to the devil himself. Both have been stripped of their authority over the believer. What glorious news! Jesus' death destroys the body of sin, but He lives to share His life with us.

Paul uses *katargeo* 27 times in the New Testament. In Romans alone, it appears six times, each time reinforcing this theme of the old being rendered powerless so that the new might reign. In Romans 7:2, the same word is translated "released"—a wife is released from the law of her husband

when he dies. In Romans 7:6, it is translated "delivered"—we have been delivered from the law. The word carries with it a permanent, decisive finality. What Christ has done, He has done once and for all.

## The Debate Over Romans 7

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Romans chapter 7 has been a topic of much debate in Christian circles for many years. Growing up as a young Christian, the debate was around this question: was Paul talking about his life before he became a follower of the Lord, or after his life was miraculously changed by Him that day on the Road to Damascus? The answer that believers give often reveals what theological foundation or tradition they stand with.

Some believed in complete sanctification or Christian perfection and could not find themselves taking the position that Paul was referring to himself in Romans 7 as a post-conversion experience. They believed that after conversion and an experience with the Holy Spirit, a person would be so sanctified that they would not sin—or at least that it was possible not to sin after such an experience. This unbiblical teaching was emphasized and even started by John Wesley and his contemporaries. This does not mean John Wesley got everything wrong, but on this point I believe he was mistaken.

I believe most of the confusion that is brought to this chapter is caused by a lack of understanding of the previous chapter. There is a saying, and it is true: **"If we do not follow the context, we will surely get conned."** Romans 7 is a liberating chapter if we understand what Paul was saying from the beginning of the book until now. His emphasis is the gospel—that by believing the good news, we are saved, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."*

— Romans 1:16

When we read the previous passages and see how Paul showed that it was not by law but by grace, that there was no difference between Jews and Gentiles when it comes to acceptance before God, that all must come the same way—by grace alone through faith in Jesus and what He has done—if we truly understood Paul, we would see that he is not now saying we should look to our own efforts in any way. The main subject is still Jesus Christ. We are bound to Him, and because of

this, we are eternally free.

## Bound to Christ, Forever Free

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*I am bound to You, forever free*

*I am bound to You, forever free*

*I am bound to Christ, forever free*

I wrote this song from my own meditation on this passage. These words capture the beautiful paradox of the gospel: the more we are bound to Christ, the freer we become. True freedom is not independence from all authority—it is being rightly joined to the One who is Life itself.

In Romans 6, Paul taught the gospel of how we are free from sin by dying with Christ. We are in union with Christ—this is Paul's emphasis as he moves into chapter 7. We are bound to Christ, but this bondage is actually true spiritual freedom. Before he came to Christ, Paul was saying he was bound to the law, but that relationship did not produce freedom. It produced bondage to sin.

### The Marriage Analogy: Released to Be Remarried

In Romans 7:1-6, Paul uses the analogy of marriage to illustrate our changed relationship. He reminds his readers that the law has jurisdiction over a person only as long as that person lives. A 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 her husband. She is free to be joined to another.

This is the picture Paul paints of our spiritual reality. We were once bound to the law—married to it, as it were. And that relationship, far from producing holiness, actually aroused sinful passions within us. The law told us what was right but gave us no power to do it. It was a marriage of condemnation and frustration. But through the body of Christ—through His death on the cross—we died to that old relationship. We have been released. And now we are free to be joined to another: to the risen Christ Himself.

*"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."*

— Romans 7:4

Do you see the glorious exchange? We were bound to the law, and it produced death. Now we are bound to Christ, and this union produces life and fruit for God. The old husband—the law—has no more claim on us. We belong to Another. We belong to the One who was raised from the dead, and in this new union, everything changes.

### **Freedom Is Not License—It Is Life**

Some will hear this message and immediately object: "If we are free from the law, then can we just sin as we please?" Paul anticipated this objection. He already addressed it in Romans 6:1-2: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" The very question reveals a misunderstanding of what grace does.

Grace does not leave us unchanged. Grace unites us to Christ. And when you are united to the living Christ—when His Spirit dwells in you—you do not desire to live in sin. The new birth produces new desires. We serve God now, Paul says, "in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6). The law could command, but it could not empower. The Spirit both commands and empowers. This is the new covenant reality that the prophet Ezekiel foresaw when God said, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27).

This is why Paul could write to the Galatians, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). The yoke of slavery is not lawlessness—it is legalism. It is the attempt to earn what God has freely given. It is going back to the old husband when the new Husband has already claimed you as His own.

## **The Struggle of Romans 7:14-25**

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What about the well-known struggle Paul describes in the second half of Romans 7? "For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15). Is this the experience of a man who is free? Yes—and here is why: Paul is describing the reality of a believer who has been set free from sin's dominion but still lives in a body that is not yet glorified. The "wretched man" cry of verse 24 is not the cry of a man who is losing—it is the cry of a man who can now see the battle because his eyes have been opened.

Before conversion, a person does not groan over sin the way Paul does here. The unbeliever is comfortable in sin. It is only the regenerate heart—the heart that has been made alive by the Spirit—that can look at indwelling sin and cry out, "Who will deliver me?" And notice that Paul does

not leave us in despair. Immediately he answers his own cry:

*"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

— Romans 7:25

The answer to the struggle is not more effort, more law-keeping, or more self-discipline. The answer is Jesus Christ our Lord. And this leads directly into the triumph of Romans 8: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2).

Romans 7 is not a chapter of defeat. It is a chapter that shows us why we needed to be released from the law and joined to Christ. It is the chapter that makes the glory of Romans 8 shine all the brighter. Without understanding our inability under the law, we cannot fully appreciate the liberty we have in Christ.

## Conclusion: Survey the Finished Work

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Beloved, when we survey the work of the cross—when we truly see how complete it was—we should also see how complete our freedom is. Our old self was crucified with Him. The body of sin has been rendered powerless (*katargeo*). We have been released from the law. We have been joined to Christ. We are bound to Him, and in this glorious bondage, we are forever free.

This is the gospel. This is the good news that Paul proclaimed from the first verse of Romans to the last. It is not a gospel of human effort or religious performance. It is a gospel of divine accomplishment. Everything that needed to be done has been done. Everything that needed to be destroyed has been rendered powerless. Everything that needed to die has been crucified. And now Christ lives in us, and we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

*I am bound to You, forever free*  
*I am bound to You, forever free*  
*I am bound to Christ, forever free*

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."*

— Galatians 5:1

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