***The Statute of Limitations
RO82-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

We begin a new chapter in Romans 7:1-6. Our subject is "The Jurisdiction of the Law."

**Laws**

The apostle Paul, as you remember, has made some very amazing statements about the principle of legal regulations, such as the Mosaic Law. These systems of rules are methods that are based upon human doings. They are variations of man's efforts to satisfy the demands of God's divine justice, and somehow to achieve absolute righteousness.

**Rules to Gain Merit with God**

So, the world is filled today with all kinds of systems of people keeping rules in order to make points with God, and to gain His favor and His blessing.

The apostle Paul comes along in Romans, and he has thus far made a series of very amazing statements relative to this matter of human achievement; human doing; and, human gaining of God's blessings. For example, in Romans 3:20, he made the statement that by the deeds of Law, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Now, that was an amazing statement to the people of that day – that keeping rules and regulations, even those that God has ordained, will in no way secure for you eternal life in heaven. A person cannot be justified by keeping a set of rules, even if God is the author of that code.

**We are not under Law, but under Grace**

Then in Romans 6:14, he has said, "For you are not under Law, but under grace." And that has been indeed a very startling and amazing statement again: "not under Law, but under grace." So, the apostle Paul, with one blow, has said again, human doing doesn't count with God at all.

So, these statements are particularly startling as you think about the people to whom they were written. These people in Rome (some of them Jews, and some of them gentiles) have no Bible but the Old Testament. That's the only Bible they have. The New Testament has not been written completely at this time. To the extent that it has been written, they don't all have copies of those letters yet. The Bible that they have is the Old Testament Bible. And, of course, what is at the heart of the Old Testament Scriptures except a system of living by rules – the whole Mosaic Law system? And these people are well acquainted with that kind of a lifestyle. And here the apostle Paul is writing to them. And as he writes to them, he constantly stresses to them that a system of rules such as the Mosaic Law does not count with God.

So, Paul is trying to show that the divine purpose for the Mosaic Law was a way of life for the Jewish nation. The purpose of the Mosaic Law was not for the purpose of salvation. Paul had to clarify that gentiles never were under the Mosaic Law, and that the Jews, who once were under the Mosaic Law, are no longer under it. The system is no longer in effect.

**Priesthood**

There are, of course, vast numbers of Christians today who have not yet learned that. They do not understand that people today do not function under the Old Testament Mosaic Law system. That whole system is dead. That whole system of code (of rules and regulations) is done for. The termination of the Mosaic Law, of course, has been clearly demonstrated by one factor, and that is that the Aaronic priesthood is no longer operating. At the heart of the Mosaic Law system (at the heart of that way of life) was a specialized priesthood descended from Aaron – the tribe of Levi. That around the priesthood is no longer operational. It has been, in fact, replaced by the universal priesthood of all believers during this age of the church. This priesthood, which is after the order of Melchizedek, which constituted the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

So, the book of Hebrews makes this clear to us. For example, in Hebrews 7:12, it says, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Law." The writer to these Jewish Christians says, "The very fact that the Aaronic priesthood has been changed to a universal priesthood of all believers shows you that the Law system no longer functions. It's done with. It's gone. The Mosaic Law is a system of legal regulations (which indeed did reflect the divine standard of absolute righteousness), nevertheless, saved no one.

**The Mosaic Law**

The Mosaic Law did tell you what God was like. The Mosaic Law did tell you that God was absolute righteousness. It demonstrated that in a variety of ways – visual illustrations of the sacrificial system and the ceremonial systems, as well as by direct declarations of Scripture.

So, in Hebrews 7:19, we read, "For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw near unto God." The Law made nothing perfect. And what the writer means is that after you did all those things under the Mosaic system, it did not bring you justification. And without justification; that is, without the position of absolute righteousness, you cannot go to heaven.

So, the apostle Paul comes on the scene of human history here, and in the process of writing this book to the people in Rome (the Christians in Rome), he makes the happy proclamation of the truth that God saves the sinner only by grace, apart from all human doing of all kind. God saves the sinner apart from a person keeping certain rules and regulations for right conduct.

Now, this was indeed a startling statement for people who had the Old Testament, and could see that there was a system of rules that was presented for the Jewish people. But they mistakenly thought it was for salvation, not understanding that it was just a lifestyle that God had ordained for that particular group of people.

So, when Paul comes along and says, "No, you don't have to do anything to be saved, you just have to believe something," it literally caused a riot; it caused much suffering; and, it put his very life in danger. We have this illustrated for us in Acts 21:28, where we read, "Crying out, men of Israel, help. This is the man (speaking about Paul) that teaches all men everywhere against the people (that is, the Jewish people) and the Law (the Mosaic Law), in this place (that is, the city of Jerusalem). And further brought Greeks also into the temple and has polluted this holy place" (which he did not do).

However, when Paul was here in Jerusalem, the thing that precipitated his being taken into custody by the Roman authorities, and which eventuated then in four years of imprisonment, was the fact that Paul was telling them about a grace way of getting to heaven, apart from keeping rules, such as the Mosaic Law.

This absolutely infuriated these people. It infuriated the Jews to the point that Acts 21:31 says, "And as they went about to kill him (the Jews to kill Paul), tidings came unto the chief captain of the band that all Jerusalem was in an uproar." Paul was only saved from death because the Roman authorities got wind of the fact that the Jewish authorities had decided simply to kill Paul, and stop this talk about God saving people apart from human doing. When the Roman authorities got wind of it, they took Paul into protective custody.

So, this was no small thing. You and I talk about grace, and we talk about it very glibly and very easily, not realizing how much it cost a man like Paul to sound forth against a legalistic system of trying to relate oneself to God, and the personal suffering (the threat to his very life) that that involved.

If you've ever talked to a legalist, you will know that these people will really get uptight, and they will really come through strong and indignant, and with a great deal of vindictiveness and anger if you suggest to them that God does not deal with people on the basis of keeping certain rules of rights and wrongs. They absolutely hate that. The unregenerate man, of course, has this kind of arrogance. He thinks that he can do something to gain God's forgiveness and God's blessing and God's salvation.

People who ,consequently, do refuse this principle that Paul has laid out, are also people who never do go to heaven. If you reject the grace system of being saved, you never can go to heaven. So, this is a very serious matter.

**The Sin Nature**

So, we come to Romans 7:1-6, where Paul is completing an explanation which he began way back in Romans 5:12, just in case you've lost track of that. Back in Romans 5:12, Paul began explaining how God, as judge of the universe, has solved one of our problems, and that is the problem of being born with a sin nature. He has previously explained to us how God has solved the problem of our personal sins (our sinful activities). Now he is dealing with the fact that we have an evil nature, and that had to be solved if we are going to be able to go to heaven.

So, he has been explaining, since Romans 5:12, how to solve that problem (the judicial solution) of the sin nature. God solved this by removing the believer from the position of death in Adam to a position of life in Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit that neutralize the sin nature's effect immediately. This solution also involves removing the believer from enslavement to the sin nature and to a life of evil, and making him a slave of Jesus Christ to a life of righteousness. That immediately then neutralized the effects of the sin nature.

So, the apostle Paul is now going to complete, Romans 7:1-6, how God, as the judge of the universe, has accomplished the solution of the problem of our sin nature.

Then, beginning with Romans 7:7, we're going to start taking up the subject of God's experiential solutions for our sin nature – your solution for your daily life (your daily problem of evil), and the solution that God has given us for that. Because don't forget, and I hardly need to remind any of us, that the sin nature is there in full capacity to do all the evil as Christians that we once did as unbelievers. It's fully operational. So, we're going to get to this grand section, from Romans 7:7 on, where God is going to explain to us how to have a capacity simply to handle evil from within us; from outside of us; from the world system; and, to be able to walk as a Christian who does not become contaminated by that evil.

However, right now, God, as judge of the universe, has accomplished by a legal decision, based on the death of Christ, a neutralizing of the sin nature. And how He has done this – he completes his explanation in the first part of Romans 7.

**The Statute of Limitations of a Law**

So, we begin with Romans 7:1, which begins with the words, "Don't you know?" We are going to deal here with the nature of legal authority – the nature of a Law's authority, and specifically with what we call the statute of limitation of a Law.

**We are not under Law, but under Grace**

The Greek Bible begins with a word which is not translated in the King James translation. The Greek Bible actually begins with this word "Or." It looks like this in Greek: "e." It is just the letter "e." This is a conjunction, and this little conjunction is going back (it's pointing back) to Romans 6:14. In Romans 6:14, the apostle Paul made one of those startling declarations about Law. There he said, "For you are not under Law, but under grace." That statement about being under grace in God's dealing with our evil precipitated an attack which was expressed in verse 15. This attack was to the effect that we might just as well then live as slaves of the sin nature since we are not under Law but under grace.

Then Paul has been explaining, in the verses that followed all the way through the rest of the sixth chapter, how that is a false conclusion. Romans 6:15-23 have been answering the objection raised. So, Romans 7:1 ties back with this little word "or" – back to Romans 6:14, in order to take up again this idea (this concept) of not being under Law (not being under a legal system), but being under a grace system.

This is further indicated that this is a tieback because you will find in a moment that the main verb in verse 14, expressed by the words "have dominion over" is the same verb which is going to be used again here in Romans 7:1, showing that he's going back and talking about this same subject of the sin nature having dominion over a person.

The idea is something like this: "Or if you question my statement of Romans 6:14."

Furthermore, this little word "or" indicates a certainty so that what Paul is, in effect, saying is, "Surely you know. If you do question what I have said to you a few sentences back here in Romans 6:14, surely you do know" something. So, he says, "Or don't you know?" The word "don't you know" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "agnoeo." "Agnoeo" means "to be ignorant," or "not to know." It is in the present tense, which means that this is the constant state of these Roman Christians: "Or do you not know" puts it negatively, meaning, "Surely you do know." It is present, which means that it is their constant knowledge. It is active, meaning that they personally possess this understanding. It's in the indicative mood in the language, indicating that we have here a special kind of indicative mood. This is what is called an interrogative indicative, or a question indicative. It's a way of using the indicative mood to ask a question in the Greek language. That's what's happening here.

To question the Romans 6:14 principles is to act as if you are ignorant of a certain fundamental fact about any legal regulation. And that's what he's saying here. He says, "Is it possible that you are an ignorant ignoramus about a certain principle that applies to all legal regulations?

Then, having used strong language, Paul goes up and he puts his arm around the Roman Christians, and he calls them "brethren" ("adelphos"). You know, when you say something rough, then you want to smile. And that sort of eases the burden. "Adelphos" is a noun. It is the general word which is applied to fellow believers of either sex: male; and, female. This is not a word that applies only to male Christians. You do not speak about brethren and "sisterns," for example. Brethren is a word that applies to men and women alike who are fellow believers in the body of Christ. And Paul is here addressing all Christians in Rome, and again, whether they are not only male or female, but whether they are Jew or gentile, they are all involved. "Or don't you know, brethren?"

Then he has an aside here (a set of parentheses): "For I speak to them that know the law." The word "for" looks like this: "gar." It's a conjunction which introduces an explanation of why they surely know the fact that he is about to point out to them: "For I speak." The word "speak" looks like this: "laleo." "Laleo" is the word for "speaking" which stresses the actual words used rather than the meaning of those words. This is in the present tense, indicating his continued speaking to them. It is active. Paul is the one who is using these words. It is indicative – a statement of fact. And he says, "When I use these words like 'ignorant' and 'not knowing,'" he says, "I am using these specific words because I know that I'm talking to people who know something.

**Knowledge by Experience**

The word "know" looks like this: it's "ginosko." The word "ginosko" is the Greek word for "knowledge through one's experience." You can learn things through study and through intellectual analysis, or through being told something, but you can also gain information through actual experience. The Greek has a way of saying, "I want to talk about knowledge that comes through experience."

So, Paul is writing to people who have had experience in how a system of legal regulations works. And that's what he's talking about: "You people know how laws work. You people know how, when the Roman government establishes a law, you know how that law works and its application. You know how, when the city in which you live passes an ordinance, how that ordinance applies within the context of your life."

So, Paul says, "You know from experience about how laws work." Again, it's present tense. This is something that was constant knowledge with them. That's what present indicates. It's an active voice, which indicates that they personally have this experience. It's a participle. He's describing a spiritual principle. And that is that they have had experience in knowing something in terms of the law.

**Law**

The word "law" looks like this: "nomos." The word "nomos" is a noun in the Greek, and it has no definite article. The Greek does not say, "*the* law." It simply says, "law." That is significant because that is telling us that he is talking about a general principle of legal regulations rather than referring to a specific code like the Mosaic Law. Some people, when they read the Bible, every time they see the word "law," the first thing that pops into their mind is the Mosaic Law. They would be inclined to think that Paul is speaking in that way here.

It is true that sometimes he does use the word "law" in reference to the Mosaic Law, and we shall see that. But at this particular point, he is not doing that. And God the Holy Spirit leads him to simply say "a law," so that it indicates that he is not looking at some specific code of regulations, such as the Mosaic Law. He is simply talking about any law that some constituted authority has passed. Paul is referring to the obligation to obey a legally constituted regulation of any kind. Now indeed, the Mosaic Law was one such legal code with which the Roman Christians were acquainted. But that is not the particular code the Paul has in mind.

So, what he has said is, "Or if you don't believe what I have said in Romans 6:14 (the principle that I have laid down there) about not being under law regulations, but under grace. Don't you know (surely you do know)." Then he says, in an aside, "(For I am using these words to people who, by experience, know how legal regulations function)."

Then, after his set of parentheses, he picks up his statement: "How that." That is this conjunction "hoti." This is introducing what the Roman Christians know from their own experience with laws: "For you know that the Law," and again, he uses this same word "nomos." But this time the Greek does say "*the* law."

**To Have Jurisdiction Over**

Now, here again, in this context, this does not mean that he's talking about the Mosaic Law. What he is talking about is some imaginary (some theoretical) legal ordinance that he's using as an example. He has said, "You know by experience how a law works. Now *the* law (referring back to any regulation or any law system as such – not the Mosaic Law, but just a theoretical rule for the sake of argument which has been passed and thereby imposed upon people) – the Law (any theoretical law or any example of a law) has dominion." This looks like this in Greek: "kuriuo." This word means "to be Lord" or "to be master of." It means "to rule over." In this case, a good translation would be "to have jurisdiction over." This is the word for a controlling authority.

It is present tense – constantly in force, once it's passed. It is active. This law now carries authority. It is indicative – a statement of fact. It has jurisdiction over a man. This is "anthropos." Now you should perhaps know something about this word. We've had the word "anthropos" many times, and you know that, while the translation here is "man," I hope you know that translation would be better as "person" or "human being," because that is what it's referring to. It refers to male and female persons. It is merely referring to subjects of any legal ordinance.

**A Statute of Limitation**

So, Paul is saying, "You know how that a legal regulation has jurisdiction over a person as long as." And these are several words here in the Greek. Actually what we have is this word "epi." That's a preposition which means "upon." Then we have the word "hosos." That's "how long. "And then the Greek adds that the word 'chronos," which is the word for "time." When you put all these together, you get "upon how long time." "Upon how long time" literally comes out in translation as "for as long a time as" or "for such time as." These three words are indicating limitation; duration; or, a statute of limitation.

We have laws for which there are certain punishments if you break the law. But these laws have limitations. Certain laws can only be applied for so long. That's called the statute of limitations. It has a time when that law can no longer apply. That is why sometimes great crimes are committed, like money being stolen. For example, when The Great Brinks Robbery was pulled off in Boston, the thieves agreed that they would simply stow the money. I think it was seven years that was the statute of limitation. And they would not spend the money until that time was over. Then they could go out and spend it, and even if the authorities could identify the money, they could not prosecute them for the crime. I think, as it turned out, somebody got itchy and nervous, and just a day or two (a short time) before, went and started spending the money, and that's what broke the case. And they got arrested while the law of limitation had not yet expired.

So, these three words are very critical, because it is trying to convey to us that every law has a terminal point when it no longer applies. "For such a time as," and that here is "as he lives." The word "lives is "zao." "Zao" is the word here, referring to the physical life of a person. It is present – his constant status, while he's breathing, and blood is flowing in his veins. It is active. The person does the living himself. It is indicative – a statement of fact.

**Until Death**

So, what Paul has established as the background for what he's going to discuss in the rest of these first six verses, is the principle of all legal regulations – that they exercise jurisdiction over a person for only a limited period of time, and that is as long as that person is alive; that is, unless some other limitation has been placed upon the statute in terms of how long that statute can be applied to a person after he has committed the crime. But as long as the person is alive, the statute does apply. In other words, nobody can take a dead man to court and sue him for anything, even if he's guilty as all get out. Once a man is dead, no matter what he's done, you can't sue him, because the law doesn't apply once he is no longer living. You have never seen a policeman stand and write out a citation to a dead man for something that he's done, because all the laws cease at the threshold of death.

**Death**

The unsaved sinner is under the constant condemnation of God's moral law, and only death can release that person from that penalty. That is the point. An unsaved sinner is constantly under the moral condemnation of God, and all that is going to come. There is only on way you can escape the condemnation of God, which ultimately is what? The lake of fire. There is only way a human being can escape the ultimate penalty for moral guilt, which is upon every human being by the sheer fact that you are born in Adam, and by the fact of the expressions of your own sin nature. There is only one way that you can escape the lake of fire, and that's death.

**The Lake of Fire**

So, here it is. The penalty is the lake of fire. How are you going to escape it? People think they're going to escape that by doing something. People think that their personal works of one kind or another are going to escape the penalty of the lake of fire. But God says, "There's only one thing that cancels out the penalty of the lake of fire, and that is death. Death cancels it out, and only death cancels it out, because death frees you from the jurisdiction of this moral law of God.

Now, if you understand this principle, you can see how pathetic all these people are who are running around trying to please God by something they do, when it is absolutely impossible. The only thing they can do in meeting this penalty is death. And in terms of moral guilt, it happens to be spiritual death. Now, they're already spiritually dead. So, what can they do? Absolutely nothing. Yet they run around thinking that they can produce what God demands to satisfy His justice, which is spiritual death. If you're spiritually dead, you're already incapacitated.

So, the principle of the termination of a legal penalty by death is at the heart of the concept of salvation by grace apart from human works. The legalist thinks that God's law of judgment for his sin nature still applies after salvation. That's why we have these Christians who are legalists, because they don't understand that God has judicially removed the penalty of the sin nature. And, of course, you can project where he's going. You can suspect what Paul is driving at, because you and I have been released from the penalty of the sin nature, because we have experienced a death with Christ. And without that co-death with Jesus Christ, there is no hope.

However, we're getting ahead of ourselves. The apostle Paul, in verse 2, says, "Now I want to illustrate this with a situation from life." And he talks about a marriage relationship. He takes up the situation of a married woman. Verse 2 says, "For." Again, it's our word "gar," a conjunction which introduces an illustration from life – an illustration to show the limitation of a legal statute.

**A Married Woman**

Then it says, "A woman." The Greek word for "woman" is a "gune." I wouldn't look upon that as offensive. That's not a goonie. Some people try to make something out of that. But that doesn't mean that women are goonies, but she is a "gune." And that is the Greek word which is used either of married or unmarried women. And this is a "gune" who has a husband. This woman, the text says, "Who has a husband." "Who has a husband" is one word in Greek. It's this word: "hupandros," and this is a very illuminating word. It is made up of two parts. The first part "hup" is from a preposition "hupo." And "hupo" means "under." And the second part, "andros" comes from a noun "aner." And this is the word that really means a male person. So, "aner" means male. So, it is also sometimes used for husbands.

**Under a Male**

So, literally marriage is described as "under a male." That is the literal meaning of "hupandros" – the describing of the marriage relationship as being "under;" that is, under the male authority. This word is used not only by the apostle Paul, but it is used by the apostle Paul because God the Holy Spirit is using him to use that word. When the President of the United States had the audacity, as he did, to say that he does not agree with everything that the apostle Paul teaches concerning women, he is obviously telling us that he does not believe in the doctrine of inspiration and the doctrine of inerrancy, and that when the apostle Paul speaks about women as, for example, using a word like "hupandros," that it is God the Holy Spirit Who is leading him to use that word, because God is seeking to convey reality, relative to how God has ordained the relationship between the human sexes. So, this word is used by God the Holy Spirit to express God's divine viewpoint about the relationship of a woman to her husband.

**Marriage**

No human viewpoint feminist movement of ignorant intellectuals (and that's what they are in the feminist movement) can change this divine order resulting from sin in the Garden of Eden. This principle of "hupandros" (of under the male) is stated as part of the punishment upon the female gender because of Eve's part in the fall. You have this in Genesis 3:16 where God turned to Eve and: "Unto the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception. In sorrow you shall bring forth children, and your desire \*your seeking of satisfaction) shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.'"

**Male Authority**

So, the marriage relationship is a woman under the authority of her husband. Now, some women may object to this. And remember that "authority" is a word that we use if you're not a strong Christian. If you are a well-developed Christian, then we will use what that really means, which is "enslavement." If you are not ready to be the slave, because that means your will is finally delivered over to the man that you're married to – if you are not willing to be the slave of that man, such that he is the final decision-maker in your life of the things that relate to you short of that which is moral evil – if you object to that, then just don't get married. That's all. Just don't louse up some nice man's life. That's all. The feminist movement should just stay unmarried. Just live high, wide, and handsome, out from under any man's authority, and see how much fun it is, and how you enjoy it. But if you don't like this concept, just have the dignity, and have the personal honor, not to louse up some nice man's life by getting married to him. Just stay out of it.

**Bound**

So, "For the married woman" is what verse 2 says at the beginning: "For the married woman is bound," and the road "bound" looks like this: it's "deo" in the Greek. The married woman is bound. It means "to bind." It connotes restraint. It connotes authority. This is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense is that tense in the Greek, which starts something in the past, and then it continues it right up to the present, and continues on to the present, and just goes on. Here something began in the past at a point – the point of marriage (the point of the marriage ceremony). At that point, she was bound to the man. When you say, "I do," you are saying, "I accept the authority of this man. I now place myself under his authority. It's in the passive voice, which means that this is the condition which is now in force upon a woman. She is bound. She has this imposed upon her. She cannot remove this. She cannot do anything about this. This is in indicative mood – a statement of fact.

**By the Law**

She is bound by what? By the law again. Again the "nomos" – by a legal regulation. This time, there is no definite article. It is not "*the* law," but by a law (a legal regulation) in general. She's bound to a husband (an "aner"). There's our word again, the word for male, as well as husband. This word is a word that distinguishes from the female, and also distinguishes an adult from a child. It's used as the husband as the male person, and that's why he is leader, not because he's smarter; not because he's brighter; not because he's better looking; not because he's more moral; or, anything else. It's just because he's male. And that is God's order of the arrangement, consequent to the fall.

**While her Husband is Alive**

Then it says, "As long as this male (this husband person) lives." And again, we have "zao." This refers to his physical life, and this modifies "husband:" "As long as he's a living husband" is literally the way the Greek puts it. This is in the present tense, while he is continuing alive. It is active. He has the life. It is participle – a spiritual principle is implied here: "While he is living," or "While her husband lives."

So, we translate this verse as: "For the married woman is bound by a legal regulation to her husband while he lives:" "But," and it has the word "de," which is a conjunction of contrast: "But if." Ah, now you know that in the Bible we have different words for "if." This is "ean." And right away this word clues us in that we're coming up to a third-class condition. You can't tell it from the "if" in your Bible, but you can from the Greek Bible. A third class-condition refers to a probable future condition. And it is a condition that says, "Maybe it will, and maybe it won't." If her husband does something; that is, if he dies: maybe he will; and, maybe he won't.

**If He Dies**

So, here he says, "She's bound by the law to her 'aner' (her male person) as long as he lives. But if this male person be dead ('apothnesko')." This means "to die," referring to physical death, the separation of the soul from the body. This is in the aorist tense – at some point, where he becomes ill, or something happens to him, and he dies. It is active. He does the dying. It is subjunctive (potential): maybe he will; and, maybe he won't. But if he should die, if that condition develops, then something immediately becomes true about that wife.

**She is Loosed**

"She is loosed" ("katargeo"). "Katargeo" comes from the word "argeo," which means "to be idle or inactive." And this preposition "kata" means "to intensify it", or "to be utterly so." So it means "to be put utterly out of action," or "reduced completely to inactivity." Basically, what the word means is "to do away with." Here we could translate it as "released from." She is absolutely and utterly released from that husband. The law says that as long as this husband lives, this woman is bound to him. Once that husband dies, then that woman is released completely from that husband. This is perfect tense. Again, it is a thing that happens in the past, and continues in the present. At the past, when the husband died, her status was to be released from the authority of that husband. And that continues to the present. It is passive. This is something that is done to the wife. She does not release herself. A woman cannot release herself from the authority of her husband. It is indicative. It's a statement of fact.

So, she is "loosed," it says, "from" ("apo"). That means separation from the law (the "nomos" again) of her husband specifically – the law of her husband (her "aner," or her male person). She is released from the law of the husband.

**When the Husband Dies, the Wife Dies**

Now, the reason that this is true is again clarified for us back in Genesis 2:24, which says, "Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. A husband and a wife are one flesh once they have been legally married and have consummated that legal authorization with the sex act. Now they are one flesh. And because they are one flesh, when the husband dies, the wife dies. When the husband dies, the wife dies. The woman does not die, but the wife dies. So, immediately, when a woman's husband dies, her status of wifehood has died with him, because they are one flesh. So, before God, she is no longer a wife. She is now immediately transported back to the position of being an unwed woman. Consequently, the death of that husband releases this woman as a wife from the authority of that husband. Nothing but death releases this woman.

We're not going to get into the matter of divorce. We're not going to get into the matter of many questions that immediately arise here, because the apostle Paul isn't doing that here. All he is talking about is this issue: that under normal circumstances, once a woman is married, she comes under the authority of her husband. And the law says that there's only one way for her to be released; there's only one termination; and, there's only one termination of that jurisdiction (of that law), and that is for the husband to die. When he dies, her wifehood dies with him. Therefore, she is now released from the authority of that husband.

We'll go on next time to pick up verse 3, where the apostle Paul simply now applies that principle, and shows what the effects are.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)