

Homework: Read through Romans 7 each day. Circle any words or phrases that you see frequently repeated. Mark what you think is the most important/key verse in Romans 7. Create a title for the chapter (below). After reading the chapter several times, create a basic outline for Romans 7 in the text below before you begin the study. Write down any questions you might have.

Notes

Romans 7

(ESV)

Chapter Title

¹ 1 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ² For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. ⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. ⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have

known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.¹⁹ For I do not

do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that

dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right,

evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,

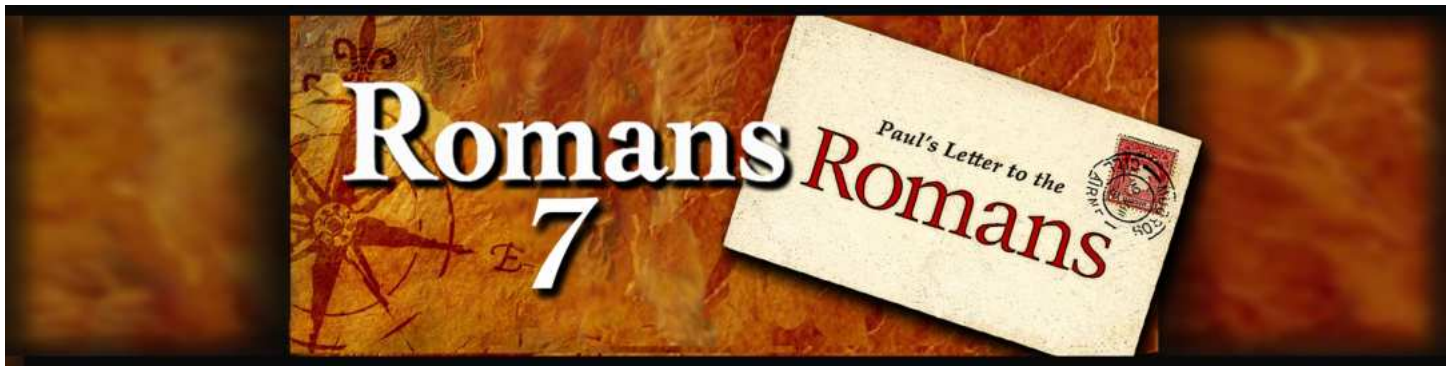
²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my

mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve

the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.



REVIEW

In Romans 5 Paul taught that Christ not only frees us from **the penalty of sin**, He also frees us from the **power of sin**. Therefore, for us to continue as a **slave to sin** would be a contradiction of our **new identity in Christ**. That new identity is defined and dependent on our **union with Christ in His death and resurrection**. In Romans 6 Paul compared the believer's new relationship to sin, symbolized as having "died to sin," being "buried with Christ by baptism into His death" and "just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." ([Colossians 3:3](#), [Romans 7:6](#), [Galatians 2:19-20](#), [1 Peter 2:24](#), [Colossians 2:12-13](#), [Ephesians 2:4-7](#)) He then begins to explain the doctrine of **Sanctification** (which continues through Chapter 8). Sanctification is the process by which believers mature and develop in their Christian life, understanding that they are to be **set apart from** the things of the world and **set apart for** the work of God. This process causes us little by little to become more like Jesus. ([Philippians 2:5](#))

Read Romans 7:1-6

In Romans 7 Paul sets out to explain a believer's relationship to the Law by comparing it to marriage. He refers to the Law 27 times in chapters 7-8.

1. Who is Paul addressing in this chapter? What do you remember about the church in Rome from previous lessons?
2. How long does the Law bind (have authority over) a person?

These verses illustrate the basic, very obvious principle that death significantly changes a person's relationship to the Law; the Law has no influence on a person after their death. (NIVSB)

In a detailed description of what it means to **not be under Law, but under grace** (6:14–15), Paul teaches:

- The Law can no longer condemn a believer (7:1–6)
- The Law **convicts believers** (and unbelievers) of sin (7:7–13)
- The Law **cannot deliver** a believer from sin (7:14–25)
- Believers who walk **in the power of the Spirit** can fulfill the Law (8:1–4). (JMSB)

The point of the comparison between the Law and marriage is that death **brings an end** to these relationships, and the widowed partner is free to be in a new relationship. Because the "marriage" with the Law was broken by death, the believer is not an "adulteress" and cannot be condemned by the Law. The believer "dies" through being united with Christ in His death, breaking the chain of disobedience and death that bound the sinner to Adam (see Romans 5:12-21).

The other side of the illustration is that the “second marriage” is to Christ, ([2 Corinthians 11:2](#), [Ephesians 5:24–27](#)) united in His death and resurrection in a **new relationship**, in which a true, though not yet perfect, obedience is offered to God in love and gratitude. (RSB)

By our death (through union with Christ in His death), we are freed from obligation to the Law, just as a wife is free from her vows to her husband when he dies. Believers are **dead to the Law**, and have nothing more to do with it. (MHC)

Verse 4 turns from the illustration of marriage to the reality of a believer’s new life in Christ. In 4a the New Living Translation says, “So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to **the power of the** Law when you died with Christ.”

3. According to verse 4, for what purpose(s) were we “crucified with Christ” ([Galatians 2:20](#)) and “raised with Christ” ([Colossians 3:1](#)), which allowed us to die to the Law?
4. What is fruit? ([Galatians 5:22-23](#), [Ephesians 5:8-9](#), [Philippians 1:11](#)) What does it mean to “bear fruit for God?”



Bible Study Technique

Noticing points of CONTRAST and CAUSE/EFFECT

- **CONTRAST** identifies differences or polar opposites in the nature of objects, purposes, meaning, etc.
- **CAUSE** and **EFFECT** show how one or more things happen as a result of something else.
 - A **cause** is a motive or an action that brings about a reaction—or reactions. A cause begins an effect.
 - An **effect** is a condition, occurrence, or result generated by one or more causes. Effects are outcomes.

5. Notice the **contrast** in verses 5-6 between the new life with Christ and the old life “*in the flesh*,” (NIV—“*realm of the flesh*”) being carnally minded. What characteristics define life in the flesh?
6. What is the **result/effect** of “*having died to what held us captive*?”
7. What is the **contrast** identified in verse 6?

The “*new way of the Spirit*” is a new state of mind which is characterized by a new desire and ability to keep the Law of God; only the Holy Spirit can produce this new state of mind. The “*old way of the written code*” is life under Old Testament Law that produced only hostility and condemnation. (JMSB)

Read Romans 7:7-13

Again, we meet Paul's recurring technique for grabbing the attention of his readers with a rhetorical question which he uses to **conclude** his former illustration of marriage and **focus** in on the next issue—the purpose of the Law—which he will discuss at some length. Paul's previous allusions to the Law have been fairly negative in tone, especially his statement that the Law arouses sinful passions. (5) Moving forward, he points out that **recognizing the negative effect** the Law has on the life of fallen humanity does not **devalue** the Law, in fact, **the purpose of the Law is key to understanding the Gospel**. (RSB)

8. What is the purpose of the Law? (7)

In his example he is quoting directly from the Ten Commandments found in [Exodus 20:17](#). “Covet” means to desire, to lust after, to long for, specifically with reference to forbidden things. ([James 1:14, 1 Timothy 6:9](#)) (LW)

Paul becomes very personal throughout the rest of this chapter, pointing the finger at himself, as an example of what is true of unredeemed mankind, and also still true of Christians. Although Paul is Christ's chosen apostle, he describes the presence of sin in his own life and his hopelessness in dealing with it, growing to near despondency as he cries out to God to rescue him from the power and depravity of the sin nature within him. ([Romans 7:24](#))

The Law reveals the **divine standard** of holiness, and as believers *compare themselves against that standard*, they can accurately identify sin, which is the **total failure to meet that perfect standard**. (JMSB)

■ The law in its justice uncovers every transgression and failure. (RSB)

Sin is again personified, given human attributes, to **represent** the sin nature living within each human being.

9. What “actions” does sin take? (8)

10. What was the “cause” of these “actions”?

The Law not only **reveals** and **defines** sin, it also **stimulates** it, provoking the precise sinful reactions that it forbids and condemns. Confronted by God's Law, the sinner's rebellious nature finds the forbidden thing more attractive, not because it is inherently attractive, but because it furnishes an opportunity to **assert one's self-will**. (JMSB) The problem is not the Law; it's the fallen human heart that takes the Law and uses it to increase sin. The Law is a **faithful revelation of what is right or wrong**, and can **justly measure and direct our moral behavior**, although the commands of the Law **lack the power in themselves to produce the obedience** that the Law rightly demands. (RSB)

The end of verse 8 states, “*For apart from the law, sin lies dead.*” The NIV says, “*For apart from the law, sin was dead.*” This doesn't mean that sin is non-existent, but that it is “dormant.” ([5:13](#)) [You may also want to refer back to Lesson 5 page 47 “*Focus on the Parenthetical Verses, Part 1*” regarding sin before the Law.]

When the Law comes, sin becomes fully active and overwhelms the sinner. (JMSB)

Paul states in verse 9 that he “*was once alive apart from the law.*” He is NOT saying that he was saved, in the sense of having spiritual life, but in his own estimation (opinion of himself), having some “good” character traits, without knowing his inward depravity. ([Philippians 3:4-6](#))

11. What were the results “*when the commandment came?*”

The Law promised life for obedience (v. 10), but when the commandment came, the conviction of the Holy Spirit caused him to see what it demanded—perfect obedience to the Law was required. Trying to obey it made him realize that inwardly, in the desires of his heart, he was constantly breaking the Law even before he knew it, and when he saw what he was doing he could not stop it. He became convinced that spiritually he was lifeless and lost. (RSB) That is precisely where he needed to be!

Notice the identical phrasing of verses 8 and 11.

12. What “actions” does sin take? (11)

█ Instead of giving life, the law brought condemnation; instead of producing holiness, it stimulated sin. (NIVSB)

13. What is Paul’s conclusion regarding the Law? (12)



Bible Study Technique

Noticing verb tenses within the context of the passage

Verb tenses are changes or additions to verbs to show when an action takes place: in the past, present, or future. The **present** represents actions happening now or **something that is generally true at all times in all places** (most often used for written passages), while the **past** represents actions that happened earlier, and the **future** describes actions that will happen later.

14. What tense is used in 7:1-3? What is the purpose of using that tense in those verses?

15. What tenses are used in 7:4-6? What is the purpose of using those tenses here? Who does the text refer to?

16. What tenses are used in 7:7-11? What is the purpose of using those tenses in those verses? Who does this text refer to?

Once again we see a rhetorical question bridging the conclusion (general truth) from verse 12 into the past actions of verse 13 and building through the rest of this chapter.

Sin is the cause of spiritual death, not the good and perfect Law. “*Sinful beyond measure*” [NIV—“*utterly sinful*”] expresses an awareness of the true nature of sin and its deadly character, which brings sinners to see their need of salvation—the **very purpose God intended the Law to serve**. (JMSB) It is in THIS way that the Law was intended to bring life. (10)

Read Romans 7:14-20

17. What is the tense in verses 14-20? Why?

18. What is the contrast in verse 14? How does Paul describe himself? ([1 Timothy 1:15](#))

Paul firmly believes that the Law is **the standard** to which life governed by the Spirit should conform. By contrast, he calls himself “*of the flesh*” (NIV—“*unspiritual*”) because he cannot fully reach this standard. As a moral ruin, under reconstruction, he displays the marks of what he **has been as a result of Adam** as well as of what he is **already becoming as a result of Christ**. (RSB)

A common experience to every believer is the constant war raging inside themselves. After a person has been born again, they are a new creation in Christ (new man, new self). ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#), [Romans 6:6](#), [Ephesians 4:22](#), [Colossians 3:9](#)) What is the “old man?” It is our ‘in Adam,’ corrupt, unregenerate self. “Old” (παλαιός *palaíos*) doesn’t mean old in the sense of time, but old in its usefulness. It’s worn out, useless, fit for the dump, the scrap heap, to be discarded. Romans 6:6 told us that the old self was crucified; it’s not just wounded. It’s dead! We are a new creation, not yet perfect, but nonetheless a new creation. (DTL-JM) However, as long as we are in this human flesh, there will be a struggle with the sin that dwells in the members of our body.

Verses 15-20 illustrate the struggle within Paul (and every believer). While not the *whole truth* about him, Paul recognizes that from the point of view of God’s holy law, this **IS** the truth about his **bodily existence and behavior** (even though he is a believer). He is able to analyze, but not fully explain, the **contrast** between **himself** and the “*sin that dwells within me*” (17, 20). His sin does not flow out of his new redeemed innermost self (“I”), but from his unredeemed humanness, his flesh “*within me*.” (JMSB) For Paul, there is a very real and perplexing conflict between the **strength of sin** and the **strength of grace** in his life; however, he indicates that indwelling sin is a temporary yet very unwelcome occupant in his life. While sin still accompanies his new identity in Christ in this present life, the new identity will result in the final triumph over indwelling sin. (RSB)

19. Verses 17 and 20 have a repeated phrase. What is repeated? Is Paul saying that he is not responsible for what he does? What does it mean?

He is not attempting to make excuses for himself, to escape moral responsibility, but he is acknowledging the great control sin *can* have over a Christian’s life. (NIVSB) He is actually describing an overwhelming conflict that is deep-rooted in the life of **every** believer—**Christ dwells in us**, yet **sin also dwells in us**. Perfect obedience to God’s will is presently out of Paul’s, and our, reach. Salvation has “already” and “not yet” dimensions. We are **already liberated from the power of sin and the penalty of sin**, but we are **not yet free from the presence of sin**. (RSB)

Read Romans 7:21-25

20. What is the first word in verse 21? What does it indicate?
21. What 3 Laws does Paul describe in verses 21-23? What is the difference between them?
22. What is the “*inner being*?” (22)
23. Where does “*the law of sin*” dwell? (23)

In verse 24 Paul reaches a pinnacle of frustration and grief as he mourns over his sin and cries out to be delivered “*from this **body of death**!*” ([Romans 6:6](#), [Romans 8:23](#)) Paul longed to be rescued from his sinful flesh that hung on him like a corpse and from which he could not gain freedom. (NIVSB) Tradition says that an ancient tribe near Tarsus tied the corpse of a murder victim to its murderer, allowing its spreading decay to slowly infect and execute the murderer—perhaps that is the image Paul has in mind. (JMSB)

But Paul’s cry for deliverance is not a cry of despair, for he knows and provides the answer in verse 25.

24. What is his answer? ([2 Timothy 1:12](#))

He is certain that Christ will eventually rescue him when he returns. ([Romans 8:18-25](#), [1 Corinthians 15:52-53](#), [56-57](#), [2 Corinthians 5:4](#))

The second half of Romans 7:25 is a summary of the two sides of the struggle Paul has just described, the duality of our “humanness”—**new life** in the Spirit, experienced by individuals in their minds, bodies, and spirits that simultaneously continue to **bear the marks of sin**. (RSB)

25. What did you select as the Key Verse(s) in Romans 7? Why?
26. Create a basic outline for Romans 7. (Hint: Use the “**Read Romans 7**” in this lesson to act as the divisions/sections for your outline. What is the main idea (title) in that section? That’s the heading for your outline!)

27. Write a summary of Romans 7.

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