

Romans 7

Romans 7:1-6

6:1-14 we are no longer slaves to sin (or to the law).

6:15-23 we need to take this freedom from sin and use it to embrace righteousness and make righteousness our master. We do not want to live as though we are still slaves to sin.

7:1-6 - Since we are united with a new husband (Christ) we are no longer obligated to the Mosaic law.

7:7-25 - If we put ourselves back under the law we are living in the flesh or living by the empowerment of the sin nature.

The Law

- Following a law seems like an easy way to measure our spiritual progress.
- The law has no value in justifying us (3:20)
- Paul's discussion here is how the law cannot help us in progressive sanctification.
 - Positional Sanctification: Sanctified (set apart, made holy) by the Holy Spirit at the time of the new birth.
 - Temporal Sanctification: How we demonstrate the character of God and his righteousness in our lives progressively more and more as we mature.

The Two Extremes

- 1) License – Saved by grace, sin does not matter. This was addressed in chapter 6
- 2) Legalism – Saved by grace but live under the law to please God and earn his favor. This is addressed in chapter 7.

Chapter 6 told us to how to stop doing “bad” things

Chapter 7 will tell us how not to do “good” things

7:1-3

The wife represents the believer. The husband represents the law.

7:4

“Therefore” or “So” introduces the comparison or the illustration.

”Now if we died with Christ” (6:8)

”Count yourselves dead to sin” (6:11)

In the illustration the husband dies and so releases her from the law.

In the application the believer dies and is released from the law.

In Romans 3:25 Christ is viewed as our **substitute**:

“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement.”

In chapter 6 and 5:12-21 Christ is presented as our **representative**.

“might belong to another” refers to our union with Christ that occurred because he died for sin.

- 1) Christ our representative dies
- 2) Christ’s death (which is our death) pays for sin, but more important in this discussion, his death separates us from the law.
 - a. We are legally released from any obligation to the law.
- 3) Since we are released from our union with the law we can now join another.
 - a. This is a reference to being joined with Christ.
 - b. The law is a non-participant in our lives any longer.
 - c. We are free from sin.
 - d. We are free from law.
 - e. We are obligated to our new Master (6:15-23) or Husband (7:1-6)
- 4) In this new relationship we can bear fruit for God.
 - a. Following the law can never produce the fruit that God wants.
 - b. Fruit from the law is like a divorced wife who has been remarried who thinks her second husband is going to be happy because she went back to her first (divorced) husband to have a baby for her second (current) husband.

7:5

“controlled by the sinful nature (σάρκη)” refers to the time before we were born again.

7:6

In 6:2 we (through Christ) died to sin

Here we (through Christ) have died to law.

Reference to the Spirit here is most likely the Holy Spirit (not the spirit of the law, or the human spirit) since chapter 8 develops this concept of the Holy Spirit.

The “way of the Spirit” and the “old way of the written code” is not talking about:

- 1) A comparison between spiritual (allegorical) interpretation of scripture with literal interpretation
- 2) Following the Holy Spirit today instead of being “bound” by the written revelation of scripture.

If either of these concepts are accepted the believer is headed down a road towards the doctrines of demons.

The believer is released from the Law of Moses.

Only in Christ can a believer produce the fruit that God desires.

Both living in sin and producing “fruit” by a law are products of the old sin nature.

Romans 7:7-13

7:7

“Sin” is ἁμαρτία “falling short”

“Not have known” is awareness of sin and personal experience with sin

“Do not covet” or “Do not Desire”

- Fallen Desire leads to acts that violate commandments #9
- Do not covet is not about not coveting things but about not having sinful desires.

7:8

“opportunity”

- A military term for “base of operation”
- The base would be where the invasion or operation began from
- This base would then also be the source of supplies

“Dead” (see verse 9 where it sprang to life) means:

- Dormant
- Like a seed
- Inactive

“is” not in Greek. Could just as well be “was” and make it personal.

7:9

“Alive apart from law” is not true but it seemed that way from Paul’s pre-Christian days

Paul was a son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6)

Paul was from the strictest sect of Pharisees (Acts 26:6)

Before Christ Paul considered himself to be faultless (legalistically faultless, Phil. 3:6)

Paul the Pharisee was self-confident and so “alive”

Paul after being exposed to the law was hopeless and so “dead”

7:10

Law Brings Life Leviticus 18:5

If there was no sin in man:

Paul -----→ **LIFE** ←-----Law

Since there is sin in man:

Paul (with sin nature)-----→**SIN. . .DEATH**←-----Law

7:11

“Deceive” 2 Cor 11:3 and 1 Tim. 2:14

2 Cor. 3:6 – The Letter Kills

7:12

Gives the answer to the question in 7:7

7:13

Law is not sin. Sin in man prevents him from life.
But Law did expose the problem

Paul (like mankind) thinks he is keeping the law when in reality man is being deceived by the sin nature and the law exposes man's ultimate corruptness since man cannot hide his desires and covetousness.

Romans 7:13-25

Review:

Paul said the believer is dead to sin and should live above sin in Romans 6:2

Paul also said the believer is dead to the law and should live above the flesh's attempt to please God by obeying rules in Romans 7:4.

Romans 7:7-12 then clarify that sin and law are two different things:

- a) Sin is bad because man's natural state is sinful. So the unregenerate man is in slavery to sin and the saved man is still drawn to sin by his sin nature.
- b) Law is bad because men try to please God by producing good works from their sinful state (both saved and unsaved).

Paul asks the question in 7:7 "Is the law sin?" since in Christ we are dead to both sin and law?

The answer is no because the thing that makes sin and law bad for believers is that they both end in death.

This is not because both sin and law are bad but because both man responds to both from his sin nature.

Paul says in 7:12 that "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good."

The law is bad for us because we respond to it with our flesh or our sin nature and we cannot produce anything ourselves that is "holy, righteous and good" compared to God or to his law.

So both sin and law are bad for Christians, but that does not mean sin and law are the same. Sin is bad. Law is good.

But, when we mix the sin nature with either bad sin or good law we get negative results.

Sin is Bad

Law is Good

Sin x Sin Nature = Death

Law x Sin Nature = Death

Paul knows he has been justified from the penalty of sin but he also realizes that his sin nature is still part of his life.

Paul cannot allow himself just to go on sinning but to strap himself to a law in order to control his sin nature is going also be unproductive.

After explaining that the law is useless to help deliver believers Paul paints a picture of his own hopeless bondage to sin if his only two choices are to sin or to follow a law.

In Romans 7:13-25 Paul describes his own personal situation of living with a sin nature being drawn to sin but not being able to count on the law for deliverance.

These verses describe Paul's life after having been saved.

This is not a description about Paul in his unregenerate state before he was saved.

The reason for believing this are the following:

- 1) Paul writes in the present tense.
- 2) If it was a pre-salvation struggle then the answer to Paul's problem is to get saved.
- 3) Paul is discussing information and conditions that are of interest and of help to believers. Why would we be interested in knowing that an unbeliever is hopeless? We want to know what to do about our situation.
- 4) This is the reality in our lives as believers today

The following charts are from Dr. Thomas Constable's web page commentary at:

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

ARGUMENTS FOR THE UNSAVED VIEW

PRO	CON
1. This was the most popular view among the early church fathers.	Other views held by the fathers have since proved false.
2. The terminology "of flesh" or "unspiritual," and "sold into bondage to sin" or "sold as a slave to sin" (v. 14) fits an unbeliever better than a Christian.	These are appropriate terms to use in describing the Christian's relationship to his or her sinful human nature.
3. If 7:14-25 describes Christians, it conflicts with how Paul described them in 6:3.	Two different relationships of the Christian are in view in these two passages. In chapter 6 our relationship to sin is in view, but in chapter 7 it is our relationship to our human nature
4. 8:1 marks a change from dealing with the unsaved to the saved condition.	8:1 marks a transition from the domination of the sinful human nature to deliverance through Jesus Christ.
5. The absence of references to the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, except in v. 25, shows that an unsaved person is in view here.	Paul's argument did not require these references since the conflict in view is between the law and the flesh (human nature).

ARGUMENTS FOR THE SAVED VIEW

PRO	CON
1. Augustine and the Reformers held this view.	Older support by the church fathers favors the other view.
2. The change from past tense in 7:7-13 to present tense in 7:14-25 indicates that verses 14-25 describe Paul's postconversion experience.	Paul used the present tense in verses 14-25 for vividness of expression.
3. If Paul described his pre-Christian life here, he contradicted what he said of it in Philippians 3:6.	In Philippians 3 Paul described his standing before other people, but here he described his relationship to God.
4. The argument of the epistle proceeds from justification (chs. 3—5) to sanctification (chs. 6—8).	In chapter 6 Paul also referred to preconversion experience (vv. 6, 8).
5. The conflict is true to Christian experience.	It is only apparently characteristic of Christian experience since the Christian is dead to sin.
6. The last part of verse 25 implies that this conflict continues after one acknowledges that deliverance comes through Jesus Christ.	The end of verse 25 is only a final summary statement.

7:13

In 7-13 Paul shows that the problem is not with the law but with sin

In 14-25 Paul describes himself as desiring to follow God, and the problem is not with “I” but sin living in him.

7:14

“Spiritual” meaning it comes from God

”Unspiritual” is the word “fleshly”

“Sold as a slave to sin”

7:15

Sin has a numbing and dumbing effect on Paul so that he says, “I do not understand what I do.” In the sinful state even Paul is confused and without understanding of these spiritual truths.

Paul’s problem:

- 1) He does what is against his will.
- 2) He cannot fulfill his own will

7:16

The problem is not with Paul's attitude because his attitude is in agreement with the Law. Paul is not ignoring the standards of God nor is he in direct rebellion to God.

So far:

- 1) Paul's desire is good.
- 2) Paul's attitude is good.

7:17

Paul is not trying to escape responsibility but he is unwilling to accept unwarranted blame. Paul desires to figure out the problem so he can deal with it and correct it.

In other words, Paul is saying to the preacher:

- 1) It's not my desire to sin so stop telling me to control my desire
- 2) It's not my bad attitude or disrespect for the things of God so stop telling me to get a better attitude.
- 3) Preacher, what is my problem? Do you know?

7:18

"Nothing good lives in me" refers to his spiritual ability to be holy, righteous and good like the law (Paul said he was unspiritual, or fleshly)

Paul pins it down to this so far:

- 1) He has a desire to be righteous and good
- 2) He does not have the ability

We have experience this in areas such as:

- 1) athletics, a desire to make the basket but not able; a desire to run fast, but unable;
- 2) music, a desire to sing, but unable; a desire to play lead guitar, but unable.

7:19

What I End up Doing

- 1) Not the good I desired
- 2) The evil I do not desire

How can this be that Paul (we) are so out of control that we cannot even do what we want to do? This is a huge problem!

The Law can't help since Paul is trying to fulfill the righteous law. He can't get saved. He already is.

7:20

Paul's conclusion:

Something else lives in me besides my own desires.
Sin itself lives in me Paul decides

7:21

“So I find this law at work” means “I find this principle at work”

Paul is not talking about The Law, but about a principle of life. (This is clear since in verse 7:22

Paul refers to “law” again but has to distinguish it by calling it “God’s Law”)

The two identities:

- 1) I, Paul, who desires good
- 2) Evil, sin, which lives with Paul

7:22**7:23**

“Law of sin” is working in Paul’s entire person: will, intellect, emotion, body

“Law of my mind” speaks of Paul’s person who desires righteousness but is infected with sin.

Law of sin and death compared with law of gravity.

Law of life compared with the law of lift.

7:24

“What a wretched man I am” echoes the cry of Isaiah in Isaiah 6

Paul does not ask “what” will rescue me but instead “Who”?

Paul does not need a what:

- 1) rules
- 2) advice
- 3) a religion
- 4) a technique

Religion has proven to be useless at this level of helping a man

Paul needs a “Who”, a deliverer, a savior. Someone to rescue him.

7:25

Paul’s conclusion points to the reason for this discussion:

There is the sin nature that still abides in the Christian that we are enslaved to in the sense it will not stop bringing its evil desires to us.