

Romans 7

How long is a person subject to the requirements of the law (v. 1)? The law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. Death ends all obligations and contracts. The law has nothing to say to a dead man.

How long is a woman bound to her husband (v. 2)? As long as he lives. **Under what circumstance is she freed from him (v. 3)?** If he dies, the marriage contract is nullified/broken and she is freed from that law to marry another man. Just as death breaks the marriage relationship, so the death of the believer....death to sin and united with Christ.....breaks the jurisdiction of the law over him (Galatians 2:19-20). Paul doesn't say that the law is dead. It still has a valid ministry of producing conviction of sin.

What lesson did Paul teach using marriage as an illustration (v. 4)? The law is compared to the husband who died. The wife is released from the obligations of that relationship. In the same way, we have died.....to the law. Death has severed the contract and we are no longer obligated to follow the law. We are free to marry another, i.e. the resurrected Christ.

What was the purpose of our union with Christ (v. 4)? To bear fruit to God.

What was the problem with the law (v. 5)? The law arouses the passion of sin within us. The law not only reveals sin; it also stimulates it. Consequently, under the law, controlled by our sinful nature, we do not bear fruit for God. We bear fruit that is counterfeit or worthless in God's eyes.....fruit for death. We only come fully to the place of bearing fruit for God when we are free from the law.

What is our relationship now to the law (v. 6)? Because Jesus died as our representative, we died with Him. Our relationship with the law has now changed. We are dead to the law and delivered from its dominion over us. We have been released from the law – its authority and requirements. **For what purpose?** To serve – with the right motives – love, as opposed to fear. As led by the Spirit, not by rules and regulations.

What question did Paul ask about the law (v. 7)? Is the law sin? As if to say, "Is something wrong with the law?" **What was his answer?** Certainly not.

If the law is not bad, what purpose did it serve (v. 7)? The law is good because it reveals sin to us. We might never know that we are sinning in many areas (such as "Do not covet" – the 10th Commandment) if the law didn't reveal it to us. The Law is similar to an X-ray machine that reveals a tumor. The machine itself is not bad because it reveals something bad.¹ The law is also good because it reveals the heart of God.

What is the relationship that Paul describes between the law and sin (v. 8)? Sinful passions are aroused by the law (v. 5). Whenever someone establishes a law prohibiting something, the natural tendency of people is to resist it. If you tell a small child, "Don't do such-and-such," you may create a desire within him or her to do it, a desire that was not there before. The Law is a catalyst that aids and even initiates the action of sin in us. Proverbs 9:17 *Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant*. One illustration of what Paul had in mind here is the story of the Temptation and the Fall in Genesis 3.

The desire to sin was awakened simply by the prohibition of the sin. The sinful nature is like a sleeping dog. When the law comes and says "Don't", the dog wakes up and goes on a rampage doing in excess what was forbidden. Once God draws a boundary for us (the law), we are immediately enticed to cross that boundary – which is no fault of God or His boundary, but the fault of our sinful hearts.

What impact did the law have on Paul (v. 9)? In his past, Paul had lived unaware of the Law's true demands, and was therefore self-righteous (Philippians 3:6). When the commandment entered Paul's consciousness, it aroused "sin," and he "died"—in the sense that he became aware of his spiritual deadness. Paul was speaking of the moment that he recognized his unsaved condition. This same pattern holds true for everyone.

What did Paul discover about himself relative to the law (vv. 10-11)? The commandment, which was supposed to bring life, brought death. Because of his sinful nature He chose not to obey it and discovered that he was condemned by it. It isn't the law that deceives us, but it is sin that uses the law as an occasion for rebellion. The law was given by God and therefore is perfect as an expression of His will for His people.

What was Paul's conclusion about the law (v. 12)? It is holy, righteous and good – which is the answer to Paul's question in v. 7.

What did Paul reveal as the source of the problem (v. 13)? Sin used a holy thing (law) for an unholy end (death). By this the contemptible nature of sin is revealed. The problem is with my sinful nature not with the law. Sin is the killer; the law, which is good, is its weapon.

What did Paul recognize about himself (v. 14)? Paul recognizes that a spiritual law cannot help an unspiritual (fleshly) man. He is in bondage under sin and the law can't help him out. He is like a man arrested for a crime and thrown in jail. The law will only help him if he is innocent, but Paul knows that he is guilty and that the law argues *against* him, not *for* him. Even though Paul says that he is unspiritual, His *awareness* of his sinful nature shows that God has done a work in him.

In one sense the Christian is not a slave of sin (6:1-14). We have died to it through Christ, and it no longer dominates us. Nevertheless in another sense, sin still has a strong attraction for us, since our basic human nature is still sinful, and we retain that nature throughout our lifetime.²

In vv. 15-25 Paul discussed the struggle with the sin nature. What was Paul's dilemma (vv. 15-20)? He *wants* to do what is right. He *knows* what the right thing is. But he can't do it; he can't keep the law. **What was his attitude toward the law (v. 16)?** The law is good.

So why did he fail (v. 17)? His problem was directly linked to the sin within him, i.e. his sinful nature. The problem with the law is.....it says, "Here are the rules and you had better keep them." But it gives us no power to overcome our sinful nature.

Anyone who has tried to do good is aware of this struggle. We never know how hard it is to stop sinning until we try. "No man knows how bad he is until he has tried to be good." (C.S. Lewis)

We must be careful not to excuse our sinning by passing it off to our sinful nature. We are responsible and must not pass the buck. Paul is tracking the source of his sin not excusing it. To be saved from sin, a man must at the same time own it and disown it.

What did Paul mean by "nothing good lives in me" (v. 18)? Paul meant that sin had thoroughly corrupted his nature ("flesh"). Even though he was a Christian, he was still a totally depraved sinner (3:10-18, 23). "Total depravity" refers to the fact that sin has affected every aspect of a person. It does not mean that people are necessarily as bad as they could be.³

How did Paul describe the problem he wrestled with (vv. 21-23)? He recognized his dilemma; the internal, unwinnable battle that is raging. Sin is able to win because there is no power in himself, other than himself, to stop sinning. Paul is caught in the desperate powerlessness of trying to battle sin in the power of *self*. There is no one more exhausted or more frustrated than the one who is trying to do God's work in man's strength.

What is Paul's conclusion (v. 24)? He is a wretched man overwhelmed with a sense of his own powerlessness and sinfulness. Paul is completely worn out and wretched because of his unsuccessful effort to please God under the principle of Law. We must each come to the same place of desperation to find victory.

What was Paul searching for (v. 24)? He was desperate for deliverance....rescue. He had tried everything. He was at the end of his rope. He finally realized he had to look for help outside of himself.

What is the answer to his search (v. 25)? Paul sees Jesus standing between himself and God, bridging the gap and providing the way to God. He acknowledges the state of struggle, delighting in God's law vs. being a slave to the law of sin, but thanks God for the victory in Jesus.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Romans, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 105

² Ibid. p. 110

³ Ibid. p. 111