

## Start your study here

*February 3, 2008*

- 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       Thus 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 not under the old written code  
    but in the new life of the Spirit.
- 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.  
    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.  
    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. (ESV)

Review: We have been freed from the power of sin; there is no middle ground, we must serve God  
Observations: 1) similarities to Romans 6 2) the conclusion, result or purpose statements 3) notice the use of the first person pronoun  
Key Question: Are you under the Law? If so, how do you keep it? If not, why not? If not, does the Law matter? What makes something tempting? Example: if you are told not to look at something, why do you want to look at it?

Tied to 5:20 and 6:15-23, how the Law fostered in and the discussion of grace overcoming the Law—power of sin has been broken

**Romans 7:1-12**

1 Or do you not know, brothers—

Indicates a new section is beginning, 1<sup>st</sup> use since 1:13, he writes to those who he assumes are believers

Dead to the Law

for I am speaking to those who know the law— As with the rest of Romans 2-6, the Mosaic Law to rule over—same as 6:9 and 14

2 Thus 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.

Marriage is an illustration of a Christian life principle—but the truth about marriage shouldn't be missed—Marriage is a permanent covenant

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 aorist passive indicative

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. 6:21-22

5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions,

explanatory

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 not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

Some might conclude

7 What then shall we say?

Law is powerless over sin

That the law is sin?

By no means!

μη γένοιτο (may it never be) Paul's strong refutation of a false conclusion (Romans 3:6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11)

Yet if it had not been for the law,

I would not have known sin.

The Law revealed sin—by stating commands, but also by revealing the character of God

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.

The Law revealed sin—by stating commands, but also by revealing the character of God

Apart from the law, sin lies dead.

Sin allies itself with the Law to create sin leading to death

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. (ESV)

Having defended the goodness of the Law Paul must now show how and why we are still in bondage to it.

**Working Idea** (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

Since the grace of God through the cross of Christ has freed us from sin and the Law, how do we deal with sin?

Romans 7 will show us that neither the Law nor our will is capable of overcoming sin's allure.

Romans 7:1-12 shows that though the Law is not evil, seeking to submit to the "rules" of the Law will not give us freedom from sin.

**Main idea:**

Men are incapable by their will of keeping God's commands or obeying Him.

**Teaching idea:**

Due to the significance of this chapter to our spiritual lives, I have divided it into two manageable sections (7:1-12 and 13-25). The logical structure is 7:1-6 and 7:7-25. So in this first lesson (7:1-12) we will be covering two related topics. The first serves to complete and review chapter 6, the second explains the result.

So in teaching this section, you will probably need to approach it as two topics.

**Introduction**

*This section will help us answer the questions:*

How truly free are we?

And that if we are free from the Law, was the Law evil?

Are you under the Law?

If so, how do you keep it?

If not, why not?

If not, does the Law matter?

What makes something tempting?

Example: if you are told not to look at something, why do you want to look at it?

**Review**

Romans 6

We have been freed from the power of sin, therefore we must present ourselves as instruments for righteousness not sin; there is no middle ground.

**Section Preview**

Pastor Bob Deffinbaugh overviews chapters 6-8 this way:<sup>1</sup>

The section we are studying in this lesson (Romans 6-8) contains three chapters. We can roughly summarize the section by chapters:

- The necessity of sanctification -- Romans 6
  - The necessity of personal righteousness -- Romans 6:1--7:6
    - ◆ Proof from our "baptism" -- Romans 6:3-14
    - ◆ Proof from slavery -- Romans 6:15-23
    - ◆ Proof from marriage and death -- Romans 7:1-6
- The impossibility of sanctification -- Romans 7
  - The source of our problem and -- Romans 7:7--8:30
- The certainty of sanctification -- Romans 8

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, ©1996 by Community Bible Chapel, 210 Abrams Road, Richardson, TX 75081, <http://www.bible.org>. Lesson 4 (I've adapted and rearranged his outline)

- God's solutions
- The appropriate response to these things -- Romans 8:31-39

## Passage Preview / Summary

As already observed, sin and death in their correlation have occupied Paul to a great degree from 5:12 on, with an occasional reference to a third element, the law. In chapter 6 he has sought to explain that the believer's crucifixion with Christ has brought freedom from enslavement to sin's dominion. Since the law has served to promote sin (5:20), it is expedient now to show that Christ's death, which involved the death of those who are his, effected release from the law also. At the same time Paul is careful to indicate that this emancipation from the law is in order to permit a new attachment, namely, to the risen Lord and his Spirit, so that from this union might flow a fruitfulness of life unattainable under the law. Since union with Christ has already been shown to be so powerful a factor in its intended result as to warrant the figure of slavery (to righteousness), the way has been made clear to teach deliverance from the law as not opening the door to irresponsible and sinful conduct.<sup>2</sup>

Having established the reasons why we should not sin, Paul now turns to the issue of *how not to sin* (7:1–8:17). Negatively, neither our flesh nor the law can do anything for us in this endeavor (7:1-25). . . . Chapter seven is supremely, then, dealing with the issue of how one fights indwelling sin—and how one attempts to please God. It has its application for all people who attempt to fight sin/please God by subjecting the flesh to external commands, as if this will accomplish anything.

The apostle begins chapter seven, however, with a reminder to believers: we are dead to the law (7:1-6). Since this is so, we do not have to attempt to please God by knuckling under to its commands. But does this mean that the law is bad? No, it is simply powerless over sin (7:7-13). The law may be likened to a sterile spoon dipped into a glass of water with sediment on the bottom (which represents our flesh). When the spoon stirs up the sediment it does not *produce sin*; rather, it merely reveals it (7:13). But at the same time, it is powerless to clean out the sediment.<sup>3</sup>

chapters 6 and 7 as somewhat parallel arguments about the believer's relationship to two of the key powers of the old regime: sin and the Mosaic law.<sup>4</sup>

## Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

We have been released from the Law so that we can walk in the new life of the Spirit.

## Outline

### I. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

*God's Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ*

#### A. The Need of It 1:18–3:20 *What a Mess!*

*The Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation: The Universal Need of Righteousness*  
*The Bad News: All condemned for sin—no exceptions*

#### B. What It Is 3:21–5:21

*What a God—The Way of Salvation*

*Justification: The imputation of righteousness to all who believe*

***“But now the righteous of God has been manifested” 3:21***

1. Justification Explanation (Defined) 3:21-31
2. Justification Illustration 4:1-25
3. Justification's Benefits (Expectation) 5:1-11
4. Amplification and Application of Justification 5:12-21 (Hinge)

#### C. How It Affects Me 6:1–8:39

*Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness*

<sup>2</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Pradis CD-ROM:Romans, Book Version: 4.0.2

<sup>3</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

Credit is due to S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., for this illustration.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000) 218.

The Purpose of Salvation: Conformity to Christ's Image

	6:1 Principle	7:7 Practice	8:1 Power
Key Subject	Surrender	Self	Spirit

1. Believer and Sin 6:1-23
  - a. Believer's Freedom from Sins' Domination 6:1-14
    - (1) Indicative: Union with Christ in His death and His life 6:1-11
    - (2) Imperative: Freedom from the power of sin 6:12-14
  - b. Believer's Enslavement to God's Righteousness 6:15-23
2. Believer and the Law 7:1-25
  - a. Believer's Freedom from the Law 7:1-6
 

*Freedom from the Law because the believer is died*

    - (1) Principles stated: death dissolved a legal relationship 7:1
    - (2) Principle illustration: marriage 7:2-3
    - (3) Application: believers are released from the Law 7:4-6
      - (a) 7:4
      - (b) 7:5-6
  - b. The Law's Relationship to sin and death 7:7-25
 

*The Law being holy reveals the sinfulness of sin and in turn sin and not the Law is the cause of death*

    - (1) Relationship between Sin and the Law 7:7-12
 

Sin—seeks a base of operations

      - (a) Question: Is the Law sinful 7:7a
      - (b) Answer: By no means 7:7b-8
        - i) Sin and Law become allies 7:7b
        - ii) Sin is responsible for sin 7:8
      - (c) Clarification: Biographical illustration 7:9-11
        - i) 7:9-10a
        - ii) 7:10b-11
      - (d) Conclusion: the Law is holy, righteous and good 7:12

Law – Powerless

The Law reveals the . . .  
 fact of sin 7:7  
 occasion of sin 7:8  
 power of sin 7:9  
 deceitfulness of sin 7:11  
 sinfulness of sin 7:12  
 The Law is—holy, righteous, and good

## Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be aware of



Think about it



Talk about it

**Teachers:** As stated above, this lesson combines to sections 7:1-6 which looks back at chapter 6 and 7:7-12 which sets up 7:13-25. You may need to teach it that way, with one main point and application for the first section and a second point and application for the last section.

### Potential Interactive Questions

Are you under the Law?

If so, how do you keep it?

If not, why not?

If not, does the Law matter?

What makes something tempting?

Example: if you are told not to look at something, why do you want to look at it?

7:1-25

*The believer's relationship to the Law is that he is free from it and its domination.*<sup>5</sup>

**7:1-6** Freedom from the Law because the believer has died

7:1 Principles stated

Death severs a legal relationship

“brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the Law”

Indicates that he is writing to believers (primarily)

And that they are acquainted with the Law

Some would insist that Paul is speaking to Jews, but in Romans, Paul quotes the Old Testament more than any other letter, assuming his readers know it. And as we have noted before, both in the context of the letter and the history of the church in Rome, there was a large portion of Gentiles in the church.

7:2-3 Principle illustration

Paul's primary purpose is not to teach a principle about marriage but about the Christian life. It is helpful to see that what Paul teaches about marriage is a principle he assumes his audience will accept.

He uses something that would have been understood as true, to teach a different truth.

In our society, the principle about marriage must be taught first—because many will not agree with it, or want to accept it, so to paraphrase Jesus' disciples, “this is a difficult truth to accept” (John 6:60) “it would be better not to get married” (Matthew 19:10).

Marriage principle from Romans 7:2-3

Marriage is a life long covenant only intended to be dissolved by death

Paul was addressing individuals (Jews and Gentiles) who were well versed in the Old Testament and understood that marriage was binding and particularly binding on a woman, who could not initiate divorce proceedings.

There is an anomaly in this illustration:

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Harold W. Hoehner's outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

In verse 1 and verse 4 Paul said that the person who dies is free from the law. The illustration, however, swerves off in another direction. The woman is free from the law when the husband dies. We would expect Paul to say that she is free from the law when she herself dies. Cranfield (1975: 334) concludes rightly that the failure to notice this disjunction calls into question the theory that the husband stands for the law and the wife stands for the Christian. Nowhere does this text suggest that the law dies; both verses 1 and 4 demonstrate that it is the person who dies, so that the law no longer has jurisdiction over him or her. . . . These analogies falter because agreement does not even exist over how the symbolism functions (so Little 1984: 86), indicating that the purpose was not to construct a point-for-point correspondence in the illustration. These are probably attempts to press the symbolism further than is warranted.<sup>6</sup>

Notice that the illustration Paul uses has two parts  
Death freed women from marriage  
That freedom allowed her to marry another

#### 7:4-6 Principle applied

7:4 This is the main point of this section  
One's relationship to the Law is changed by death

“you have died to sin” aorist passive, indicates that this is something God has done

In 7:4 we have the same concept stated in 6:2, 10—we have died to the Law, that is we are released from bondage.

7:5-6 Explanation of the main point  
The Law is not able **to produce righteousness**.

*Believers have:*

Freedom from condemnation

Before freedom, we bore “fruit for death” –were under the sentence of condemnation

Freedom from power

Paul states that “while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the Law” indicating that the Law enabled or empowered sin.

The shocking statement in Rom. 7:5 is that these desires for sin were aroused by the law (τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου ἐνηργεῖτο). The typical Jewish view was that the law helped prevent people from sinning. Paul contends that it aids and abets sin, that sin is provoked and stimulated by means of the law.<sup>11</sup> Jewish history supports Paul's contention, for under the law Israel ended up in exile because of its sins. The point of this discussion is that Cranfield's view that Paul is referring only to the condemnation of the law is not comprehensive enough. Paul is also thinking of the law as a power that wields influence over human beings and exercises control by provoking sin.<sup>12 7</sup>

The death of Christ definitively broke the power of the law that in concert with sin produced death.<sup>8</sup>

When Paul says that believers have died to the Law (v. 4), that they have been released from the Law, died to its tyranny, and no longer serve in the oldness of the letter, he has in mind the role of

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998). 348.

<sup>11</sup> Rightly Gieniusz 1993: 394–95. Ziesler (1989: 176–77) says the verb could be rendered “were active,” and then the verse could simply mean that sins like coveting were made explicit with the promulgation of the law.

<sup>12</sup> The words ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν should not be limited only to the physical body, but refer to the various capacities of human beings. This accords with my discussion of this term in Rom. 6:13 and 6:19.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 350.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 351.

the law in the lives of unbelievers. He refers to the effect that the law has for those “in the flesh” (ἐν τῇ σαρκί, *en tē sarki*, v. 5). It is the law without the Spirit that inevitably produces sin.<sup>17 9</sup>

Freedom for service

The purpose of our release from bondage to the Law—purpose of our freedom--  
 To “bear fruit for God”  
 Or as stated in 6:4 “walk in newness of life”

**Colossians 1:9-23**

Prayer

9 And so, from the day we heard,  
 we have not ceased to pray for you,  
 asking

content

that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will  
 in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 purpose

so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,

2:6

fully pleasing to him,  
 1 bearing fruit in every good work  
 2 and increasing in the knowledge of God.

11

3 May you be strengthened with all power,  
 according to his glorious might,  
 for all  
 endurance

12

and patience with joy,  
 giving thanks to the Father,  
 who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Providential will—yield, surrender  
 Moral will—obey  
 Personal will—based on surrender  
 and obedience—say “yes” first

What fruit?

The practical works of service not religiosity  
 Fruit of obedience  
 Love God  
 Love People  
 Fruit of the Spirit

Are we free from the requirement to obey commands? Yes, obedience to God, but not to the Mosaic Law.

1 Corinthians 9:19-21 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. (ESV)

We are free from the Mosaic Law but not the

“law of God” 1 Corinthians 9:21  
 “law of Christ” 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2  
 law of love Galatians 6:13-15

Aside

Not being under the Law is not restricted to only the civil and ceremonial law, versus the moral law. Jews did not have that distinction.  
 We are free from the authority of the Mosaic Law, just as we are free from the authority of sin (chapter 6).

<sup>17</sup> See Calvin 1960: 141. For an extended defense of this thesis see Hafemann 1995: 156–86. As Hafemann argues, the contrast is a salvation-historical one.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 353.

## Point

We are free from the Law in order to serve

### The Law

Woman → Husband dies ∴ Woman free to marry another  
 Believers → Through Christ's death ∴ Believers free to serve in the new way of the Spirit

Verse 6 completes the comparison. **By dying to that which was once in control, the believer is now released from the law and freed to serve in a new way.**<sup>74</sup> Formerly we were in bondage to written regulations. Law was our old master.<sup>75</sup> But now we are set free to serve our new master in a new way, in the Spirit.<sup>76</sup> **The shift from law to Spirit is a shift from legalism to true spirituality.** How unfortunate that so many believers continue to understand their Christian experience within an ethical framework determined by law. To serve in the Spirit is to live the resurrected life, to claim our rightful place in Christ. Dead to sin and freed to live for righteousness, we now live lives that bear fruit for God.<sup>10</sup>



What do we learn from Romans 7:1-6 and how do we apply it?

Believers are free from the Mosaic Law.

Believers are bound to God through Christ's death in order to bear fruit in keeping with their new life in the Spirit.

Believers are free from the Mosaic Law but not free from the need to be obedient to God

Believers are free from the Mosaic Law and should not seek to be obedient through another "set of laws" (legalism).

Teachers see Moo pp. 222-224 for a nice discussion of the application of these principles. Particularly his explanation of the believer's freedom from the whole Law.

## 7:7-12

*The Law being holy reveals the sinfulness of sin and in turn sin, and not the Law, is the cause of death*

This section answers the question: Is God's Law good or evil?

The answer will show the relationship between the Law and sin.

In the succeeding verses of chapter 7 Paul mounts a defense for the goodness of the law, even though it is intimately involved with the tyranny of sin. The theme of verses 7–25, therefore, is not anthropology and existential human experience but the goodness of God's law.<sup>1</sup>

But the goodness of the law does not stand alone as the thematic center. It is inextricably linked with the wickedness of sin, which employs the law to advance its nefarious purpose. Paul counters the view that the law can function as the agent of transformation, for those who lived under the law were unable to keep it. That the goodness of the law is central in verses 7–25 is

<sup>74</sup> Commentators are divided on the question of whether ὥστε δουλεύειν expresses purpose, potential result, or actual result. The NIV follows the third option. The most natural rendering is to take it as expressing God's purpose in releasing us from the law. We are free from law *so that we may* live in the Spirit.

<sup>75</sup> "The old way of the written code" is "its strait-laced interpretation" (Black, *Romans*, 94).

<sup>76</sup> For other verses that compare the Spirit and the written code, see Rom 2:29 and 2 Cor 3:6. Paul's antithesis is a contrast between the old dispensation and the new.

<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995). 162.

<sup>1</sup> So Bultmann 1960: 153; Kümmel 1974: 57; Stendahl 1976: 92–93; Beker 1980: 238–39; Stuhlmacher 1994: 105. Byrne (1996: 209) maintains that Paul introduces the law for antithetical purposes in order to contrast it with the life under the gospel.

apparent from the question regarding its sinfulness opening the discussion in verse 7, from the conclusion drawn regarding its goodness in verse 12, and from the statements made or implied about its spirituality and rectitude in verses 14, 16, 22, and 25. In every case, however, Paul contrasts the law's goodness with the wickedness of sin (vv. 14, 17, 21, 23, 25).<sup>11</sup>

PAUL'S NEGATIVE EVALUATION of the effect of the Mosaic law reaches its crescendo in 7:1 – 6. He accuses the law of arousing sin (v. 5) and of keeping those who are under its authority from coming to know Christ (v. 4) or experiencing the new life of the Spirit (v. 6). The believer's release from the power of the law is just as much good news as her release from the power of sin (ch. 6). No wonder, then, that Paul asks, "Is the law sin?"<sup>12</sup>

As mentioned before, 7:7-12 naturally fits with the remainder of the chapter which is an elaboration on 7:4-6.

The starting point for Paul's elaboration is his own personal history. Notice that Paul uses "I" eight times in this section, to point to a very personal experience.<sup>13</sup>

**sn Romans 7:7–25.** There has been an enormous debate over the significance of the first person singular pronouns ("I") in this passage and how to understand their referent. Did Paul intend (1) a reference to himself and other Christians too; (2) a reference to his own pre-Christian experience as a Jew, struggling with the law and sin (and thus addressing his fellow countrymen as Jews); or (3) a reference to himself as a child of Adam, reflecting the experience of Adam that is shared by both Jews and Gentiles alike (i.e., all people everywhere)? Good arguments can be assembled for each of these views, and each has problems dealing with specific statements in the passage. . . . One major point that seems to favor some sort of an autobiographical reading of these verses is the lack of any mention of the Holy Spirit for empowerment in the struggle described in Rom 7:7–25. The Spirit is mentioned beginning in 8:1 as the solution to the problem of the struggle with sin (8:4–6, 9).<sup>14</sup>

When we get to 7:13-25, we will deal more extensively with the questions of who and when Paul is focusing on—that is, is this Paul before conversation or Paul after conversation? etc.

Sin takes advantage of the desire to do right and turns it to constant failure (legalism).

#### 7:7 fact of sin

The Mosaic law helped him come to understand clearly the extent and seriousness of his sin.<sup>15</sup>

The use of "know" is in the sense of concrete experience. "All men are selfish and inwardly rebellious against God. However, sin cannot be brought to light in such a way that it can be seen and measured apart from its rejection of a specific commandment of God. This is what Paul meant by 'knowing sin;' he rejected God's command and so became conscious of himself as a sinful being."<sup>16</sup>

**The law helps us understand the extent and seriousness of sin.**

This paragraph about the coming of the law accomplishes two purposes: to maintain, against a possible misunderstanding (7a), that the law of Moses is *holy, righteous and good* (12) and to explain the relationship between sin and the law (7b–11). In making the latter point, Paul asserts

<sup>11</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998). 358.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000) 225.

<sup>13</sup> We'll deal more with this in the next section, though as you read Moo's commentary realize that there are other potential interpretations.

<sup>14</sup> *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006). Ro 7:7.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000) 226.

<sup>16</sup> Lloyd M. Perry and Calvin B. Hanson, *Romans: A Model for Bible Study Methods*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1982, p. 76.

that the law had been the means by which he came to ‘know’ sin (7b). What Paul means by this is not simply that the law told Paul what sin was but that the law, with its explicit spelling out of the commandments of God, gave sin the opportunity to stimulate rebellion against God and made absolutely clear his sinfulness and death (8–11). Such is our sinfulness that the very labelling of an action as transgression against God’s holy law leads us to violate it; and it is in this way that the law ‘stimulates sinning’ (5:20; 7:5) and brings wrath (4:15).<sup>17</sup>

7:8-10

“ <i>apart from law</i> ”	“ <i>when the commandment came</i> ”
“ <i>sin is dead</i> ” (v. 8c)	“ <i>sin sprang to life</i> ” (v. 9b)
“ <i>I was alive</i> ” (v. 9a)	“ <i>I died</i> ” (v. 10a)

Nevertheless, regardless of how good the commandment is, it cannot help the believer overcome sin. **But** instead of the commandment helping one, it produced a strong desire to **sin**. Paul was not using *sin* from 7:7–12 so much as an act, but as *sin* being a compelling force igniting the fallen nature within believers to rebel when confronted with a commandment. Hence Paul says: **For apart from the law sin was dead**. Paul does not mean *sin* did not exist *apart* from *the law*, because he already said it does (5:13; cf. 4:15). Instead, apart from the law *sin was dormant* and *inactive*. Sin is like the inactive HIV virus that can lead to AIDS. A person might not know he has it, but all it takes is for it to be activated for the person to know and be consumed by AIDS. The law becomes that which activates sin within believers allowing them to know and be consumed by sin. The law precipitates rebellion, not because it is sinful, but because man is. Psychologically when a person focuses on a negative (as the “shall not” of the law dictates) the pressure heightens making the violation extremely desirable.<sup>18</sup>

7:8 Occasion of sin

“Opportunity” originally was a military term meaning “a base of operations” (same as in 7:11) **That in essence means that what the cross accomplished—freedom from sin and the Law—is undone by the yielding to the deceitfulness of sin (see below: Definitive prohibition or Principle of the Forbidden Fruit)**

In the first sentence in **verse 8**, Paul takes the argument one step further. Not only did he come to understand sin through the law; he also was led into greater sinning through that same law. Just how this happened Paul does not explain. But he probably has in mind the power of a definite prohibition to stimulate in sinful people a rebellious reaction. Told not to do something, we desire all the more to do it. Thus, paradoxically, the very prohibition of a sin leads to even more of that same sin. In this way, Paul says, sin uses the law as an “opportunity” or bridgehead (*aphorme*; cf. also 7:11; 2 Cor. 5:12; 11:12; Gal. 5:13; 1 Tim. 5:14) to accomplish its purposes in people. Note how Paul continues to picture sin as a power.<sup>19</sup>

7:9-11

The Apostle may now be describing how he experienced the truth of v 8 in Christian infancy: **I was alive (*ezōn*) once without the law**. One may interpret the latter sentence in three possible ways: (1) This may mean *when no law existed*; Paul refers to his existence in Adam in the garden before the command came and Adam sinned (Genesis 2:16ff.; 3:3). (2) It refers to the period of Paul’s life prior to his conversion when he was not conscious of the existence and significance of the law. (3) Yet, in “view of Paul’s climactic affirmation in Ro 7:25, Paul probably illustrates in the first person the perils of a Christian who succumbs to the illusion that moral action is connected with law rather than with the ‘spirit of life in Christ’ ” (BDAG, 425; cf. Rom 8:2)<sup>20</sup>

7:9 Power of sin

<sup>17</sup> Douglas Moo in, *New Bible Commentary*: 21st Century Edition, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked Power to Deliver* (Springfield, Missouri: 21st Century, 2005). 148.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000) 226.

BDAG *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

<sup>20</sup> René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked Power to Deliver* (Springfield, Missouri: 21st Century, 2005). 149.

It would be natural for Paul to merge his own experience relative to sin and the law with the experience of his people Israel. As he has made clear throughout Romans, the coming of the commandment (= the giving of the law of Moses) meant for Israel not “life” but “death.” Their sin was exposed and magnified, and greater wrath came on them (4:15; 5:20).

To be sure, the law held out within it the promise of life (7:10). As [Leviticus 18:5](#) (quoted by Paul in [Rom. 10:5](#) and [Gal. 3:12](#)) teaches, “Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them.” But the power of sin already at loose in the world through Adam kept this good intention from being realized. People were unable to obey the law (see [Rom. 3:9](#)). Thus, the law imprisoned Israel in their state of sin (see [Gal. 3:23](#)) and led, in fact, to her “death.”<sup>21</sup>

#### 7:11 Deceitfulness of sin

*Illustration: Definitive prohibition or Principle of the Forbidden Fruit*

What is our instinctive reaction when someone says, “Don’t look.” We look

What is a child’s instinctive reaction when a parent says, don’t touch.

When we see a sign that says, “Wet paint” what do we want to do? Touch to see if it is wet. Would we have wanted to touch that wall if the sign were not there? No.

I guess that means you know you are mature when you can walk by a sign that says, “Wet paint” without checking to see if it is.

James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (ESV)

“desire” neutral—good or bad desires can lead us to sin

#### 7:12 Sinfulness of sin not the Law

The Law is reflection of the holy, righteous and just character of God.

#### Point:

Don’t miss the point: Man’s inability to obey God.

#### Summary / Key Point

We are free from the Law for the purpose of serving God

We are incapable by our will to obey God.

This should create a great sense of “struggle” or tension between who I am (dead to sin, dead to the Law) and what I do. And that struggle is important—without the struggle we will not be ready for the solution.



What do we learn  
About God?

He is holy, righteous and just.

His Laws are good not evil.



Act on it

How should the truth that by your will you are incapable of obeying God, change the way you approach your spiritual life?

Next week we will look at how great this struggle is.

<sup>21</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000) 227-228.

## Romans 7:1-11

- 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       Thus 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 not under the old written code  
    but in the new life of the Spirit.

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.

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.

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. (ESV)