

Romans Chapter 7

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Introduction:

Albert Barnes summarizes the *Book of Romans* to this point:

In the previous chapters Paul had shown that law was incapable of producing justification, chapters 1-3; he had shown the way in which men were justified by faith, Romans 3:21-31; 4:1-25.

He had shown how that plan produced peace, and met the evils introduced by the fall of Adam, Romans 5. He had showed that Christians were freed from the law as a matter of obligation, and yet that this freedom did not lead to a licentious life, Romans 6.

And he now proceeds still further to illustrate the tendency of the law on a man both in a state of nature and of grace; to show that its uniform effect in the present condition of man, whether impenitent and under conviction, or in a state of grace under the gospel, so far from promoting peace, as the Jew maintained, was to excite the mind to conflict, and anxiety, and distress.

Nearly all the peculiar opinions of the Jews the apostle had overthrown in the previous argument. He here gives the finishing stroke, and shows that the tendency of the law, as a practical matter, was everywhere the same. It was not, in fact, to produce peace, but agitation, conflict, distress.

Yet this was not the fault of the law, which was in itself good, but of sin, Romans 7:6-24.

The main design of this chapter is not very difficult to understand. It is to show the insufficiency of the law to produce peace of mind to a troubled sinner.

● **This Chapter at a Glance:**

Marriage Pictures Our Relationship to the Law

You Died to the Law When You Died With Christ

No, the Law Is Not Sinful

Understanding the Law Brought Spiritual Death

Death Was Not From the Law, but From Sin

There is a Civil War Within Us

The Tale of the Potato Chip Sack

Paul is Overpowered

How the War Ends

MARRIAGE PICTURES OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW

Romans 7:1: NLT Now, dear brothers and sisters -- you who are familiar with the law -- don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living?

- Paul is not detouring to a discussion of marriage, but *extending* his discussion about believers and the law. The previous *extended metaphor was slavery*:

Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Romans 6:19.

Now he is switching to an *extended metaphor of marriage* to illustrate a believer's relationship to law. This is established by "for example" in verse two and "this is the point" in verse 4.

- Paul's purpose in verse 1 is to stress that **law** applies to the **living** and not the dead. He uses everyone's knowledge of marriage (just as he used everyone's acquaintance with slavery) to illustrate his point.

(2) For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her.

- Paul's aim is to show that the obligations of marriage end with the death of her husband.

(3) So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

- The passing of the husband frees the lady from charges of **adultery** if she **marries another man** because the **marriage** contract frees her at his **death**. The point of the illustration is that just as **death** breaks the **marriage** relationship, so the death of the believer with Christ breaks the jurisdiction of the **law** over him.
- We must understand that **marriage** can become a complex matter and interpreting its complexities is not what Paul is doing here. He is illustrating another subject: being freed from the **law** (marriage).

YOU DIED TO THE LAW WHEN YOU DIED WITH CHRIST

(4) So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the One who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.

- So now comes the application to believers: **We died with Christ.** We have been freed from the **power of the law** (our first husband) and have been **united with Christ.** In this new relationship, we can produce a **harvest of good deeds.** We can have a large family! In Israel, a large family led the way to leadership and wealth.
- It must be observed that believers are not free from the law so we can do our own thing. We are united with Christ and God intends for us to be productive.

(5) When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death.

- Paul drops the marriage metaphor and speaks of the issues of life directly.

The Old and New for Believers		
<i>Charles Dailey 2022</i>		
Viewing ourselves as:	Under law:	But under God's Grace 6:14
- being slaves. 6:6	Under Sin's control 6:12	Now set free from the power of sin. 6:7
- being married. 7:1-6	Restricted in life.7:2 We died and are released. 7:6	Now freedom after death. 7:3 Now living in the Spirit. 7:6

(6) But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

- **Burton Coffman** alerts us to some details here:

We have been released shows that Paul was here *identifying himself* as a former disciple of **the law**, thus including himself with the Jewish Christians to whom he addressed this appeal. Paul's use of the first person here should be noted.

The old way of obeying the letter of the law . . .

The new way of living in the Spirit.

These phrases refer to the life "in Christ Jesus" on the one hand, and to life under Moses' law on the other.

NO, THE LAW IS NOT SINFUL

(7) Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet."

- There was a failure here. Was it the **law**? Not at all. The **law** served its purpose: to *identify sin*, but the **law** has no way to pay the penalty for law-breakers.
- The **law** Paul has in mind is the **Law** of Moses where he quotes the final commandment from Exodus 20:17. The first *nine* commandments were action laws, but the final one is about one's state of mind.
- Paul had led a conscientious life under the **law**, but the last commandment has to do with thoughts only, and Paul failed that test.

(8) But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.

- Paul personifies **sin** because the power behind **sin** is Satan --very much a person. Hear Jesus:

For when a strong man like Satan is fully armed and guards his palace, his possessions are safe --

(Luke 11:21 NLT)

Let's never assume that **sin** is merely a set of broken laws. It is the putrid tool of a living and active Satan who has been doomed to eternal hell.

Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

(Revelation 20:10 NLT)

UNDERSTANDING THE LAW BROUGHT SPIRITUAL DEATH

(9) At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, (10) and I died. So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead.

- When had Paul lived **without understanding the law**? At least from the time he began to understand the world around him up until the time of his bar-mitzvah when he became a "son of the law" at 13, the normal age.

(11) Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me.

- So when Paul understood the last commandment he knew he had been **deceived** by **sin**. So **sin killed** him in the sense that it spelled death to his best hopes of deserving or earning salvation by keeping the first nine **commandments**.

(12) But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.

- The **law** did him in. Is it the fault of the **law**? No, as before, the **law** is not designed to bring law-breakers back into fellowship with God. The **law** is designed to make God's will for mankind

clear. Also, the **law** does not have any mechanism to help people be successful in keeping its precepts.

DEATH WAS NOT FROM THE LAW, BUT SIN

(13) But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes.

- **Sin**, Satan's tool, used the **law** to separate Paul from **God** and that is Satan's purpose in the universe. His evil tool worked.

(14) So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin.

- Paul acknowledges that the **law** is not at fault, but he is. He speaks again of being a **slave to sin** like all other **humans**. Review the chart that follows verse 5.
- I'm playing spoiler, but the solution to the problems Paul is bring to the front is to be "**in Christ.**" **Verse 25.**

(15) I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.

- Paul identified what God wanted but acknowledged his human nature as contrary to pleasing God.

(16) But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. (17) So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

- Paul acknowledged that the **law is good** when he acknowledged **doing wrong**. He recognized the power of **sin** in his sinful nature. Notice the prominence of the first-person pronouns—I, me, my, myself; they occur over 20 times in verses 9-25! People who go through this Romans 7 experience have taken an

overdose of “Vitamin I.” They are introspective to the core, searching for victory in self, where it cannot be found.

THERE IS A CIVIL WAR WITHIN US

(18) And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. (19) I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.

- He faces the inherent **sinful nature** that is so contrary to way of life set forth by the law.

(20) But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

- Paul's higher nature is informed by the God's law and is at war with his lower nature driven by **sin**.

(21) I have discovered this principle of life -- that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. (22) I love God's law with all my heart.

- Paul finds himself **wanting to do right**, but actually doing **wrong**. He is very clear that he **loves God's law**.

THE TALE OF THE POTATO CHIP SACK

A CIVIL WAR STORY

I bought this sack of tasty potato chips at the store. It will last until next week.

I'll munch on three or four of them while I listen to the news. It's so upsetting anymore. I'll just reach into the full sack. No need to dirty a dish just for chips. We need to make snacking as efficient as possible.



Really, that news seems unreal. I'll get another chip. In fact, I'll get two. As long as they taste so good, I'll eat a handful. That's more than I intended, but this news is so disturbing. Now I'll stop eating the chips. No more chips for me.

This newscaster is so perturbing. He seems to purposely upsetting his listeners. Maybe I should just turn him off. Thinking this through calls for another handful of chips, but just this time. Anyway, the sack of chips is getting pretty light.

Actually, I think I'll just finish the sack and go without chips for the rest of the week. This snack turned out differently than I planned, but what difference does it make? I won't do this again.

● Other Civil War stories might include:

- Omitting what is important to the Lord. Believers are to assemble with others to set examples, to encourage others, to hear of the needs of others in the assembly and the needs of those in more distant places.

Believers are to assemble regularly.

Technology enables us to listen to a sermon, turn off the device and turn to our own interests. But I'll get back to church.

- Love for nudity. Some love to view others and some love to display their bodies for others. This interferes with building relationships with God's people and prizing them for what God is doing in their lives. It eases the way to reputation-destroying immorality. "This new garment isn't quite as modest as I have been wearing, but it won't hurt."

Modesty must be worn inside of us.

- Using Alcohol. Self-control is a signal that the Lord is reigning in our hearts and using alcohol as a beverage lowers and destroys our self-control. Its regular use damages judgment and memory. "I'll just have one glass."

Alcohol is a perfect solvent: it dissolves marriages, families and careers.

- Recreational drugs might be the potato chips for some. True joy and happiness come from working each day with the Lord in making decisions and solving problems. Recreational drugs may become a quick ticket to eternity and there are no second chances there.
- Gambling is the potato chips for some believers. When the Lord provides our needs through prayer and wisdom, He doesn't want His provision exposed to chance.
- This list can go on for pages. Every believer must stop munching on the potato chips that take over their lives.

PAUL IS OVERPOWERED

(23) But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. (24) Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

- He clearly sees the sinful human nature as his enemy and the **war** is on. Paul had cast his anchor inside of the boat instead of where it could do some good. In the next sentence he had praises God for the answer to his failures.

THE SOLUTION FOR THE WAR

(25) Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

- We are too weak when left to ourselves. It's that **sinful nature** that needs help. And the help IS there.

MUSIC BOX	
<i>Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)</i>	
Verse	Link: Put in Browser:
Romans 7	http://bitly.ws/qrMK