

**Rom. 7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?**

Paul starts this section of scripture with a question. He makes a point of noting that he is speaking to people who are knowledgeable about God's law. The question—Don't you know that the law only has authority over a man as long as he is alive? Point being—the law ceases to be a factor in one's life after death.

**Rom. 7:2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.**

**Rom. 7:3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.**

Example—A marriage places a woman in a position of submission and obedience to her husband as long as he is alive. If the husband dies, the woman is free to marry again if she so chooses. The husband can no longer exert any authority over her life from the grave. If, however, a woman leaves her husband to marry another man while her husband is still living, that woman is called an adulteress by the law and she is subject to the penalties of the law accordingly.

**Rom. 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.**

Paul now makes application from his example to the believer. The believer has chosen to accept Christ as His Savior. He has killed / crucified / reckoned dead his old self and has become a new creation in Christ.

*2Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

“married to ‘another’” and “him who is raised from the dead” = Jesus Christ  
The believer becomes a new creation with new life free to enter into a new marriage relationship. Sin no longer has any authority over this new creature; Christ becomes your new “husband.”

What is the focus of this marriage? To bring forth fruit unto God. Fruit is produced by any work we do in obedience to God.

**Rom. 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.**

“motions” = something undergone, an emotion or influence, a passion

“passion” = (Webster) The state of the mind when it is powerfully acted upon and influenced by something external to itself....any emotion or sentiment

(specifically, love or anger) in a state of abnormal or controlling activity; an extreme or inordinate desire.

Those two definitions vividly explain the impact of sin on the unbeliever, the person in the flesh. These sins gain such a hold on the unbeliever that they walk a path of continuous self-destruction and death—both physical and spiritual. That person's only hope is to recognize and repent of his/her sin and become a new creature in Christ.

The fruit unto death produced in the life of the unbeliever is declared in chapter 1, verses 29-32.

**Rom. 7:6** But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

We (believers) are delivered (loosed, set free) from the law; it has become useless, without effect, no longer in a position of authority in our lives. We are dead as far as the law is concerned; we have been crucified with Christ.

It's interesting that not once has Paul said that the law was dead. Even Christ stated that He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

*Matthew 5:17* Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

"We should serve" what? The law. But not as one bound by it—as one who recognizes that law as a guideline from the Father to protect us and motivate us. We are to obey the law in spirit—not with the legalistic attitude of one who is just reading the words without hearing with the heart. I think that is the whole focus of Christ's teaching as presented in Matthew 5-7.

**Rom. 7:7** What shall we say then? *Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

Paul is making such a point that the believer is free from the law, he realizes that some might be thinking that the law is a bad thing—that it is sin. He emphatically answers that is not true. The law was established for our good; it allows us to identify our sins. Paul then gives a personal example. He would never have recognized lust (longing for what is forbidden) in his own life if the law had not stated, "Thou shalt not *covet*" (set the heart upon, long for (rightfully or otherwise), lust).

Paul was Pharisee, a Jew that prided himself on keeping the letter of the law. In comparison to many people on earth, he could feel that he was a pretty righteous man. This helps explain why coveting jumped into his mind as an obvious example to use. Other people would not be able to look at him and know he was

covetous—but he knew. He knew what the law stated and what was happening in his heart; the law pointed out the sin in his life.

**Rom. 7:8** But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead.

“concupiscence” = a longing for what is forbidden, desire; lust

“taking occasion by the commandment” – I think the best way to explain this is to have one think about the general response of one who has been forbidden something. The more we are told we shouldn’t do something; the more we want to do it. Isn’t that finally what got Eve into trouble. We’ll do our best to justify why we should do exactly what we have been forbidden to do. Any parent can testify to this common human reaction.

So what Paul is saying is that his sin nature produced in him a stronger and stronger desire to do exactly what he knew he shouldn’t. If a line of demarcation had never been drawn, maybe he wouldn’t have struggled so hard with the sin of lust. But the line has to be drawn for our good. God was giving us a fence of protection to avoid unnecessary trouble and pain in our lives.

**Rom. 7:9** For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

I think Paul is saying that he used to live his life without the negative impact of lusting for the forbidden because he didn’t really understand the intent of the law; he followed the letter of the law. In coming to know Christ, he learned to understand the intent of the law. Once he fully understood that he needed to obey not just the letter of the law, but the heart of the law, he began to recognize the power of the sin nature in his life and the struggle began.

“I died.” – I’ve thought about these two words for quite a while. Is it as simple as meaning that Paul was identifying with death in Christ? It seems to be the third point of a series of events.

1. The law came. (He learned to fully understand its purpose.)
2. Sin revived. (He became aware of sin in his life that he had not previously recognized, and the struggle between the flesh and the spirit began.)
3. I died.

It seems to apply more to how he dealt with his sin than just his position in Christ. He considered himself dead and no longer serving the sin nature. He chose to deny the flesh and walk in the Spirit in obedience to the new authority in his life—Jesus Christ.

**Rom. 7:10** And the commandment, which *was ordained to life*, I found to be unto death.

These are hard sections, and I often read several translations as well as a couple of commentaries to see if I can get a jump start when I'm stuck. I really liked the comments from the Believer's Bible Commentary on this verse:

This probably looks back to Leviticus 18:5, where God said, "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord." Ideally the law promised life to those who kept it. The sign outside a lion's cage says, "Stay back of the railing." If obeyed, the commandment brings life. But for the child who disobeys and reaches in to pet the lion, it brings death.

The last phrase of this verse seems to acknowledge the times of failure that Paul experienced in learning to die to the flesh and walk in the Spirit.

**Rom. 7:11** For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

This verse is almost a repeat of verse 9. The key difference in this verse is an explanation of how sin trapped him—through deceit. Because he allowed himself to be deceived, he fell into sin. What is the result of sin? Death.

*Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death...*

I just got the thought that being deceived is a result of either lack of knowledge or ignoring what we know to be true. It drove home to me the importance of knowing the word of God. The better we know His word, the less likely the child of God is to be deceived. Eve chose to ignore what she knew. She allowed herself to be deceived because of her thoughts, feelings and emotions. Where does all that come from? The heart.

*Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

We need to base our choices on the truth of the word of God—not on what our heart tells us to do.

**Rom. 7:12** Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

"the law" = "the commandment"

Paul is still giving an answer to verse 7. The law is not sin; in fact, the law is "holy, just and good."

"holy" = sacred, pure, virtuous

"just" = represents righteousness; Webster – "not doing wrong to any"

"good" = beneficial, valuable, fair, honest.....kind, merciful

How often when we think of the **law** do we think of it with the adjectives listed above? The words that would come most readily to our mind are confining, restrictive, “don’ts,” prohibitive, negative, etc. That is never what God intended. The law was established to provide healthy, protective guidelines for the children of God. It was never meant to cause harm, but to bring forth good. I thought it was very interesting to find the words *kind* and *merciful* in the definition for *good*. The spiritual leaders of the Jews had turned something meant for man’s good into something unyielding and merciless—a basis for doing wrong by forbidding good.

**Rom. 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.**

“that which is good” = the law (both the written record and the innate knowledge of it in each person’s heart)

The law did not produce death in man; man’s sinful actions in response to that law are what result in death. Thankfully, the law reveals our sin to us.

For sin to be exceedingly sinful there must be a standard of comparison; the law is there to reflect the comparison of good (as defined by the law) to bad (our sin).

I like this quote from Warren Wiersbe: “Instead of being a dynamo that gives us power to overcome, the Law is a magnet that draws out of us all kinds of sin and corruption.”

I have always told my children that sin is sin—period. Maybe that is true technically, but the scripture teaches that sin can be excessive and some sins can be worse than others.

*Matthew 11:24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

This verse indicates a difference in the severity of judgment decreed based on the level of sin.

**Rom. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.**

As unbelievers, we are creatures of the flesh subject to, in bondage to, the sin nature. We were originally created as spiritual creatures meant for fellowship with a spiritual being—God. When we chose to break fellowship with God, we became carnal creatures controlled by the flesh. The law was established to speak to the spirit of man—not his flesh. A person controlled by the flesh has a hard time getting past his sin nature to understand the good of the law. Once we become new creatures in Christ, our spirit is once again able to more readily understand the intent of the law, the heart of the Father in establishing that law, instead of the letter of the law.

**Rom. 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.**

**Rom. 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.**

How loving of the Spirit to have Paul include these two verses in this letter to the Romans. Most of us consider Paul as one of the greatest Christians to ever live—still, in this body of flesh he struggled with sin. He was just like you and me. He struggled with making the right choices. He wanted to choose what was pleasing to God, but sometimes he made the wrong choices anyway. He wanted to avoid doing things that were displeasing to God, but sometimes he did those wrong things. The new creature Paul is able to understand that the law is good in identifying his sin and by providing loving guidelines/boundaries for his actions.

I found a quote from Steve Brown when reading his book “A Scandalous Freedom” that applies here:

“The Apostle Paul gives his testimony in Romans 7 about the state of his life. (Some suggest Paul talks here about his past experience, but the last time I checked, both Paul and God knew about verb tenses. If Paul had been describing his experience in the past, where the statute of limitations had run out, he would have said so.)

**Rom. 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.**

As believers, we are new creations in Christ. Until we experience physical death (or the rapture), we are housed in the old body of flesh that still possesses the sin nature. Paul is saying that when he sins, he is yielding to the temptations of his flesh, the sin nature; it is not the desire of the new creature in Christ that is the true Paul.

I have a quote from somewhere in my notes that applies here:

“Sin dwelling does not equal sin ruling, but it is a force to reckon with.”

**Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.**

**Rom. 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.**

**Rom. 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.**

**Rom. 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.**

This section seems to be making a stronger statement of the truth of verses 15-17. In these verses Paul identifies what he wants to do as “good” and what he does not want to do as “evil.” That is a principle that has helped me—learn to call

your sin what it is; don't candy-coat it. You need to see sin in your life as something evil.

Paul can honestly say that his desire is to do good, but the influence of his sin nature is always pulling him toward sin. He addresses this same problem in his letter to the Galatians:

*Galatians 5:16-8 & 24-25 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law....And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

The key to overcoming the lust of the flesh is to walk in the Spirit. The obvious question becomes how to learn to walk in the Spirit. The key is in submitting to our "new husband"—Jesus Christ. Paul is going to address this subject further in the next chapter. The key in being able to submit is a matter of love—and love is a choice. The Lord summed it all up by identifying two commandments as the greatest.

*Mark 12:29-31 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Note: If love were something we could not control, the Lord would never have commanded that we love.

**Rom. 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:**

"delight" = feel satisfaction concerning

As a new creation in Christ, Paul gets satisfaction and pleasure in having a set of loving, protective commands from the Father in heaven—commands meant for his well-being, not for his harm. His understanding comes from having a Spirit connection with the Father through the Son.

**Rom. 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.**

In his physical body of flesh, however, Paul has a different response to the law. The desires of his flesh are always in conflict with the desires of his spirit (mind/being), and the flesh seems to win more often than it should. (Even once is too much.)

**Rom. 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**

I really identify with Paul as he pens these words. I have another note from somewhere that a wretched man is one that is weary with the struggle.

I truly want to be the person the Lord wants me to be, but sometimes it seems like the situation is hopeless. Sometimes it seems like the very thing I pray about, even the simplest things—like “Lord please let me drive this car like you would drive this car”—gets tested immediately when someone pulls out in front of me, or cuts me off, or \_\_\_\_\_. My immediate response is in the flesh. I know that would not be the response of Jesus. I continue to “miss the mark” so often in my attitude or choices or \_\_\_\_\_. It puts me to shame to see His response to me compared to what my responses have been too often as a parent. Sometimes it seems as though I’m going backwards instead of forwards in my spiritual growth. I think this is a bit of what Paul was feeling. But—he didn’t stop with this verse. He admitted his terrible frustration and then moves on to focusing on his Deliverer—Jesus.

**Rom. 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.**

Paul knew that in and of himself he could have no victory over the flesh and sin, but through the Lord Jesus Christ he has been/will/would be delivered. Who does Paul give thanks to? God the Father—but he also acknowledges that his ability to be able to give thanks is due to Jesus His Son, the Messiah, our (fellow believers) Lord (Master).

“mind” = the intellect, i.e. mind (divine or human; in thought, feeling, or will)  
The mind isn’t the equivalent of the brain. The mind represents the intelligent part of our being that is eternal, our spirit. It represents the part that is transformed by the new birth. Paul is saying that as a new creation in Christ, he serves the law of God (which we identified above as *holy, just* and *good*). In the body of flesh that is still ruled by the sin nature, he is still a servant to the law of sin.