

Romans 7

[Rom. 6:22](#) But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

- As Paul ended Chapter 6, he made that statement
 - He was talking about slavery and freedom
 - Once enslaved to sin, resulting in death
 - Now enslaved to God, resulting in a present benefit
 - Sanctification
 - And future outcome or fulfillment (telos)
 - Which is eternal life
- Remember the important audience within this church?
 - The Jews
 - And remember their principal failing?
 - An over-reliance on the Mosaic Law
 - So Paul seizes the opportunity to press the point on our freedom from law using the slavery comparison

[Rom. 7:1](#) ¶ Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?

[Rom. 7:2](#) For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

[Rom. 7:3](#) So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

- Paul's open phrase "or do you not know" is a way of saying "I know you understand and would agree with this..."
 - He calls them bretheren
 - Adelphos, brothers in love

- Though the term is often used by Paul and others for Christian brothers
 - Here it means something different
- And we know that because of the parenthetical statement that follows
 - I am speaking to those who know law
 - The Jews in the group
- Here he introduces one of the most powerful analogies for understanding our relationship to law having come to faith
 - A married woman is bound to her husband
 - What binds her? Law
 - How does law bind her?
 - The Mosaic Law doesn't permit divorce
 - It creates the bind
 - But God declared that marriage is an earthly attachment, so death changes the relationship
 - And it permits the establishing of a new one
 - Paul says she is released
 - The law that previously bound her to her husband now is no longer in effect for her, since her husband died
 - She can join herself to another
 - If she had joined to another man without the death of her husband, she is an adulteress
 - But the husband's death frees her
- Now Paul applies the analogy

[Rom. 7:4](#) ¶ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

- We were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ
 - Remember in chapter 6, Paul says we were laid along side Christ in the grave
 - Spiritually, when we were baptized in the Holy Spirit, we experienced a death of sorts
 - Christ having died in our place, we join Him in that death spiritually speaking, through the baptism of the HS
 - So we are the wife in Paul's analogy
 - But we are also the one who died
 - We are the wife, but we died (not the law, the husband)
 - We have died in Christ
 - And then we are alive in Him again
 - But that death freed us from our previous relationship to the law
 - Were we freed so as to be a law unto ourselves?
 - No, we were freed to be joined to another
 - We are joined to Christ
 - We are His bride
 - We have been joined to the New Covenant and now are enslaved to Christ
 - So that we might bear fruit – sanctification
- If Christ met the

[Rom. 7:5](#) For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

[Rom. 7:6](#) But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

- Before we were saved, we were in the flesh
 - Living according to our human sinful nature
 - In that state, the Law had the effect of raising sinful passions in our body
 - When something was declared off limits according to God's law
 - That prohibition didn't settle the issue for us
 - Since we lived according to the flesh, we took every prohibition as a dare
 - You may not remember thinking like that, or maybe you do
 - But whether you consciously thought that way or not, your nature was wired that way
 - Desire to do the wrong thing was a natural part of who we were
- But back to the analogy again
 - We have been released (katargeo = to render inoperative, abolish, through death) to the Law
 - Having been released from the Law
 - We now serve God in newness of Spirit, not in oldness of law
 - Paul says that our service to God is now accomplished in spirit
 - Not according to the law
 - Serving God now isn't found in keeping the Mosaic Law
 - It doesn't preclude observing some aspect of the Law as a memorial or other casual purpose
 - But it can't be seen as an obligation or necessity to please or serve God
 - It's an old relationship, and we are to attend to the new relationship not continue to prop up the old one

- Like a widow who remarries but keeps calling her new husband by the name of her old husband...
- So sanctification, which was Paul's topic as he ended 6, is now the nature of our service to God
 - Where before men were trying to serve God through the keeping of a specific set of rules
 - They have served their purpose
 - Like a play, where the actors were supposed to act their parts to help declare the story to the world
 - The play is over
 - Now we serve God according to the Spirit in us
 - What does this say about the purpose of the Law. Was the Law the problem?
 - If the Law aroused sinful passions, then are we saying that the Law was the cause of sin?

[Rom. 7:7](#) ¶ What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."

[Rom. 7:8](#) But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead.

[Rom. 7:9](#) I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;

[Rom. 7:10](#) and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;

[Rom. 7:11](#) for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

[Rom. 7:12](#) So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

- Here's another contrary
 - The Law is holy
 - It was the instrument God used to show men their sin in clear, undeniable terms
 - It is the plum line that made clear that I was outside God's favor

- Because everywhere I turned, I saw in myself the behaviors that God has declared to be sinful
 - Had I been able to abide by this Law, it would have been life to me
 - Instead, it became temptation to a nature that was opposed to God and programmed to choose evil
 - The moment you tell someone what they can't do, they start contemplating doing it
 - So, in that sense the commandment brought about the very thing it prohibited
 - But only as a
 - So the Law if all good, and yet it was a tool of conviction for men
- Take note of which Law Paul chose to highlight in his example
 - He used one of the Ten Commandments
 - This Law was holy in that it outlawed a specific sin
 - And that law was shown to be good because it stood opposed to my sinful flesh
 - We can only appreciate light properly when we are sitting in darkness
 - But the fact that he used one of the 10 commandments, means that when Paul has been speaking of Law throughout this chapter, he intended to include the Ten Commandments
 - We have been released from all the Law
 - But we have been joined to another
- Paul begins to do something interesting here
 - He begins to personify sin
 - He makes it an actor separate from us as persons
 - It acts upon us and we are it's slave
 - And he subtly refers to sin in the Garden in verse 11, as the source of death

- And ever sin, it has been controlling men
 - And the Law simply enflamed sin's passions to act even more contrary to God's holiness
 - This is where we see the enemy lurking behind the whole situation

[Rom. 7:13](#) ¶ Therefore did that which is good become *a cause of death* for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

[Rom. 7:14](#) ¶ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

- So did the Law which is a good holy thing become the source or cause of death?
 - Never again
 - Sin was always the cause of death
 - But the fact that sin turned something meant for good (the Law) into a cause for our condemnation just shows how utterly bad (sinful) sin is
 - The law originated with God and describes a godly perspective
 - One that our flesh cannot ever understand or identify with
 - Being polluted and naturally opposed to God, it cannot agree with the Law nor even understand it

[Rom. 8:7](#) because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is **not even able to do so**,

- So now Paul moves toward a personal example of how the sinful nature of our flesh continues to impact our sanctification through the Spirit

[Rom. 7:15](#) For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

[Rom. 7:16](#) But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good.

[Rom. 7:17](#) So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

[Rom. 7:18](#) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.

[Rom. 7:19](#) For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

[Rom. 7:20](#) But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

- Paul will talk in terms of two actors
 - One actor he calls I
 - The other actor he names sin
 - The I is already identified as Christ's spirit living in me
 - The sin is the flesh of the body still polluted with a contrary nature
 - One is eternal and is being transformed into the image of Christ
 - One is mortal and is destined for the grave
 - It is still an enemy of God's Law
- Paul says what I am doing, I do not understand
 - For I am not practicing what I like, what I prefer
 - I am doing what I hate
 - God hates sin, and our spirit being one with Christ's spirit now also shares that hatred for sin
 - It is not what we prefer or want
 - Yet in verse 16, Paul says the logical thing
 - If I do the very thing I don't want to do, then I am agreeing with the Law
 - In my dislike over sin, I am agreeing with the Law and acknowledging that sin is wrong and God's standard of holiness is right

- Paul says he acknowledges this simply by the fact that he is no longer attracted to sinning
 - His changed view of sin is proof of the goodness of God and His law
- So the sin I do is not I, but sin in me (the flesh nature)
 - Nothing good dwells in the flesh, he says (v.18)
 - For I have a willing (desire) to do the right thing, but yet at times I practice sin despite a desire to do otherwise
 - This is proof that sin acting in the members of my flesh is a separate force apart from the spirit

[Rom. 7:21](#) ¶ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

[Rom. 7:22](#) For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
[Rom. 7:23](#) but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

[Rom. 7:24](#) Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

[Rom. 7:25](#) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

- This leads to a principle
 - Evil is present in me, and apart from who I am as an eternal being
 - Before faith, it was all there was to me
 - Now I have been raised into a new life that lives apart from the flesh and apart from sin and therefore apart from Law
 - I joyfully concur in my Spirit with God
 - But there is a different law working my members
- This leads to a war in each of us
 - There is a law of the mind, Paul calls it
 - He means our intellectual agreement with God's holy standards

- It fights in a war with the flesh of the body that holds it a prisoner of the law of sin
 - If that were the last word on our situation, what a miserable situation?
 - If we had nothing else to look forward to, we would be stuck in this war forever
 - We would be a wretched person
- Paul asks, who will set us free from this body of death?
- Thanks be to God through Christ!
 - So Paul summarizes the chapter with the final statement
 - With out mind (or conscious self) we serve the law of God
 - But with our flesh, we continue to serve the law of sin
 - The fight lasts as long as we live in this body

This chapter is very important for several reasons. It corrects the popular idea that our struggle with sin is only against specific sins and habits whereas it is also against our basic human nature. Second, it shows that human nature is not essentially good but bad. Third, it argues that progressive sanctification does not come by obeying laws, a form of legalism called nomism, but apart from law. It also proves that doing right requires more than just determining to do it.

"Legalism is that fleshly attitude which conforms to a code in order to glorify self. It is not the code itself. Neither is it participation or nonparticipation. It is the *attitude* with which we approach the standards of the code and ultimately the God who authored it."²⁶⁴

Legalism also involves judging the behavior of ourselves, or others, as acceptable or unacceptable to God by the standard of obedience to laws that we, rather than God, have imposed. Someone else has defined legalism (really nomism) as the belief that I can obtain justification and or sanctification simply by obeying rules.