

Table of Contents

For Romans 7

READ THE APPROPRIATE CHAPTER Page 126

READ AND DISCUSS EACH VERSE AND TRANSLATION AMONG YOUR GROUP (ROMANS CHAPTER SEVEN). Page 127

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (ROMANS CHAPTER SEVEN). Page 144

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR DISCUSSION AMONG YOUR GROUP (ROMANS CHAPTER SEVEN). Page 145

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

In Your Group Read Romans chapter seven (aloud) in a modern translation or read it in the King James Version (below). As a Group, Discuss the general content of the chapter.

THE LETTER OF ROMANS CHAPTER 7 King James Version

ROMANS 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? **[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. **[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. **[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. **[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. **[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. **[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 (EXODUS 20:17; DEUT. 5:21)**. **[8]** But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. **[9]** For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. **[10]** And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. **[11]** For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. **[12]** Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. **[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. [14] ¶ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. [15] For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. [16] If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. [17] Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [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. [19] For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [20] Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [21] I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. [22] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [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. [24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [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.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GROUP: Read and Discuss each verse and translation along with the “Additional Information” in each box provided.

ROMANS CHAPTER 7 VERSES 1-3

Romans 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? [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. [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. (King James Version)

¹Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don’t you know that the law applies only to a person who is still living? ²Let me illustrate. 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. ³So 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. **(New Living Translation)**

¹Brothers and sisters, all of you understand the law of Moses. So surely you know that the law rules over people only while they are alive. ²For example, a woman must stay married to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from the law of marriage. ³But if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, the law says she is guilty of adultery. But if her husband dies, she is free from the

law of marriage. Then if she marries another man, she is not guilty of adultery. **(New Century Version)**

You shouldn't have any trouble understanding this, friends, for you know all the ins and outs of the law – how it works and how its power touches only the living. For instance, a wife is legally tied to her husband while he lives, but if he dies, she's free. If she lives with another man while her husband is living, she's obviously an adulteress. But if he dies, she is quite free to marry another man in good conscience, with no one's disapproval. (verses 1-3) **(The Message)**

You know very well, my brothers (for I am speaking to those well acquainted with the subject), that the Law can only exercise authority over a man so long as he is alive. A married woman, for example, is bound by law to her husband so long as he is alive. But if he dies, then his legal claim over her disappears. This means that, if she should give herself to another man while her husband is alive, she incurs the stigma of adultery. But if, after her husband's death, she does exactly the same thing, no one could call her an adulteress, for the legal hold over her has been dissolved by her husband's death. (verses 1-3) **(Phillips Translation)**

[1] All of you know something about law. So surely, my brothers and sisters, you know that the law has power over a person only as long as he's alive. **[2]** For example: A married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But if he dies, she is free to marry someone else. **[3]** If she lives with another man while her husband is still living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, the law no longer considers her married, and she does not commit adultery if she marries another man.

(The Last Days Bible)

Additional Information: It is one thing for a believer to understand that his identification with Jesus Christ means that he has died to sin, it is no longer his master (Rom. 6:2) and to count or reckon that to be true (Rom. 6:11). But it is something else for him to deal with sin (as an evil principle) that dwells within the moral body with efforts to express itself in thoughts and actions (See Romans 7:23). This is the internal conflict in the area of sanctification that every believer faces (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 465).

Romans 6:1-6 describe the liberation from the law; verses 7-13, the actual working of the law; in verses 14-25 we are shown that this working of the law is not due to anything in itself, but to the power of sin in the flesh (Denney's Commentary).

"The law" refers to a standard of conduct, behavior, which is expected of men. There are other uses of the word "law." Sometimes it is used in reference to a principle that governs our lives, such as the law of gravity. But here Paul is talking about a standard of conduct that we are expected to live up to. The most obvious and perfect expression of that law is the Ten Commandments (See Exodus 20:3-17). That is a standard of conduct. That is the law Paul talks about here. The purpose of the law is to condemn failure. In one way or another, it points out and punishes wrongdoing. It does this in the laws of our land, in traffic laws, and even in our so-called "moral" laws. Evil and wrongdoing always take their toll. Therefore, the nature of law is to condemn failure (From Guilt to Glory, vol. 1, pgs. 214-215). So long as a man continues under the law as a covenant, and seeks justification or sanctification by his own ability or obedience, he continues the slave of sin in some form. Grace delivers from that power of the law, which condemns for the sins that we committed. While the law still fulfills its function of guiding us to know God's moral standards (Rom. 13:9), we are free from the enslavement to it as a way of righteousness (See Gal. 2:21; Rom. 10:4 KJV). Paul illustrates our freedom from the law with the analogy of marriage, showing how the death of one partner frees the other from lifelong obligations (Spirit filled Life Bible, p. 1697). Paul shows that the law is powerless to save the sinner (Rom. 7:7-14), the law-keeper (Rom. 7:15-22), and even the person with a new nature (Rom. 7:23-25). The sinner is condemned by the law; the law-keeper can't live up to it; and the person with the new nature finds his or her obedience to the law sabotaged by the effects of sin that dwells in the flesh (Rom. 7:22-23). Once again, Paul declares that

salvation cannot be found by obeying the law. No matter who we are, only Jesus Christ can set us free (Life Application Bible, p. 2039).

Paul's purpose now is to press home the point that the believer is not under the law (Rom. 6:1-6), that a Christian putting himself under the law fails to avail himself of the resources of grace (Wuest's Word Studies, vol. 1, p.113).

(Verse 3) – “She shall be called an adulteress.” Who calls her that ? The law does. The law condemns her; it points out her failure; it calls her an adulteress. It is only when the first husband dies that she is free from that condemnation of the law and thus can marry again. When she does, the law is absolutely silent; it has nothing to say to her at all (From Guilt to Glory, vol. 1, p. 219).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

VERSES 4-6

Romans 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. [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. [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. (King James Version)

⁴So this is the point: The law no longer holds you in its power, because you died to its power when you died with Christ on the cross. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, you can produce good fruit, that is, good deeds for God. ⁵When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced sinful deeds, resulting in death. ⁶But now we have been released from the law, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. Now we can really serve God, not in the old way by obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way, by the Spirit. **(New Living Translation)**

⁴Your “husband,” your master, used to be the Jewish law; but you “died,” as it were, with Christ on the cross; and since you are “dead,” you are no longer “married to the law,” and it has no more control over you. Then you came back to life again when Christ did and are a new person. And now you are “married,” so to speak, to the one who rose from the dead, so that you can produce good fruit, that is, good deeds for God. ⁵When your old nature was still active, sinful desires were at work within you, making you want to do whatever God said not to and producing sinful deeds, the rotting fruit of death. ⁶But now you need no longer worry about the Jewish laws and customs because you “died” while in their captivity, and now you can really serve God; not in the old way, mechanically obeying a set of rules, but in the new way, with all of your hearts and minds. **(The Living Bible)**

So, my brothers, the death of Christ on the cross has made you “dead” to the claims of the Law, and you are free to give yourselves in marriage, so to speak, to another, the one who was raised from the dead, that we may be productive for God. While we were “in the flesh” the Law stimulated our sinful passions and so worked in our nature that we became productive – for death! But now that we stand clear of the

Law, the claims which existed are dissolved by our “death,” and we are free to serve God not in the old obedience to the letter of the Law, but in a new way, in the Spirit. (verses 4-6) **(Phillips Translation)**

[4] That is the way it is with you, my brothers. You also have died, as far as the Law is concerned, because you are part of the body of Christ; and now you belong to him who was raised from death in order that we might be useful in the service of God.

[5] For when we lived according to our human nature, the sinful desires stirred up by the Law were at work in our bodies, and we were useful in the service of death. **[6]** Now, however, we are free from the Law, because we died to that which once held us prisoners. No longer do we serve in the old way of a written law, but in the new way of the Spirit **(Today’s English Version)**

[4] That is why you, my brothers, who through the body of Christ are now dead to the Law, can now give yourselves to another husband, to him who rose from the dead to make us productive for God. **[5]** Before our conversion our sinful passions, quite un-subdued by the Law, fertilized our bodies to make them give birth to death. **[6]** But now we are rid of the Law, freed by death from our imprisonment, free to serve in the new spiritual way and not the old way of a written law. **(Jerusalem Bible)**

[4] My Christian brothers, that is the way it is with you. You were under the power of the Jewish Law. But now you are dead to it because you are joined to another. You are joined to Christ who was raised from the dead. This is so we may be what God wants us to be. Our lives are to give fruit for Him. **[5]** When we lived to please our bodies, those sinful desires were pulling at us all the time. We always wanted to do what the Jewish Law said not to do. Living that kind of life brings death, **[6]** but now we are free from the Jewish Law. We are dead to sin that once held us in its power. No longer do we follow the Jewish Law which is the old way. We now follow the new way, the way of the Spirit. **(The New Life Testament)**

[4] In the same way, my brothers and sisters, your old selves died and you became free from the law through the body of Christ. Now you belong to someone else. You belong to the One (*Christ*) that was raised from death. We belong to Christ so that we can be used in service to God. **[5]** In the past, we were ruled by our sinful selves. The law made us want to do sinful things. And those sinful things we wanted to do controlled our bodies, so that the things we did were only bringing us spiritual death. **[6]** In the past, the law held us like prisoners. But our old selves died and we were made free from the law. So now we serve God in a new way, not in the old way with the written rules. Now we serve God in the new way with the Spirit. **(The Easy-to Read New Testament)**

[4] For that reason, my dear friends, when the Messiah suffered and died on the cross for your sins, you were released from your marriage to the Law of Moses. So now you can be married to another – to the one who was raised from the dead, so that thru your marriage to Him, you might produce the fruit of faithfulness and obedient service to God. **[5]** When we lived mainly to satisfy the various appetites of our flesh, our corrupt desires became rebellious and inflamed when the Law challenged our actions, and we kept on bearing fruit that would result in death. **[6]** But now we’ve been set free from the Law, because that which once controlled our lives is now dead. Now we joyfully serve God with new understanding and a new heart, no longer hoping to get right with

God in the old way by performing the rites and ceremonies of the Law. **(The Last Days Bible)**

Additional Information: (Verse 4) – Paul has compared the believer to a married woman; when her husband dies she is free to marry another man. The Christian is released from the Law (though the Law does not die), and this release from the Law is made possible by the death of Christ and by the death of the believer in connection with Christ's death (Help for Translators, p. 130).

"You also have become dead to the law." The analogy is not perfect, here we died, not the law. But the point is clear. Because a death has occurred, old obligations and powers are broken, and we are no longer under a system of trying to obey in our own strength. We are dead to that system of "law" (See Rom. 3:20; 6:14) (Spirit Filled Life Bible, p. 1697).

(Verse 5) – Verses 5 describes the pre-Christian experience, verse 6 describes the present life of faith under the leadership of God's Spirit (Help for Translators, p. 130). In our pre-conversion state our "sinful passions," originating "in the flesh," were "aroused by the law," leading "to death." As believers, similar struggles with sin in the flesh occur, but need not prevail. The difference is the presence of the Spirit to bring them under Christ's kingdom dominion within us (Spirit Filled Bible, p. 1697).

"In the flesh" here describes a person who is able to operate only in the sphere of fallen mankind – an unredeemed, unregenerate person (Rom. 8:9). Although the believer can manifest some of the deeds of the flesh, he is not "in the flesh" by nature, he is a new creation and has a new nature (2 Cor. 5:17) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1526).

"Aroused by the law." The law not only reveals sin; it also stimulates it. The natural tendency in man is to desire the forbidden thing (NIV Study Bible, p. 1715).

(Verse 6) – Freedom from the Law does not mean license to sin, but servitude to God. In the "newness" of the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit, gives power to obey God, a power the Law by itself could never give (Spirit Filled Bible, p. 1697).

"Delivered from the law" is not freedom to do what God's Law forbids (See Rom. 6:1, 15; 8:4; 3:31) but freedom from the spiritual liabilities and penalties of God's Law (See Gal. 3:13). Because we died in Christ when He died, the law with its condemnation and penalties no longer has jurisdiction over us (Rom. 6:1-3) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1526). "Released from the law" means in sense of its condemnation (NIV Study Bible, p. 1715).

(Verses 4-6) – In these verses Paul applied his illustration of marriage to a believer and the Law. He said, "You also died to the Law." Just as a believer "died to sin" (Romans 6:2) and so is "set free from sin" (Romans 6:18, 22), so he also died to the Law and is separated and set free from it (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:19). As a wife is no longer married to her husband when he dies, so a Christian is no longer under the Law. This separation was "through the body of Christ," that is, because of Christ's death on the cross. As a result Christians "belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead. This One of course is the Lord Jesus Christ. In a sense believers are united to Him as His bride (Eph. 5:25). God's purpose in all this is "in order that we might bear fruit to God" (See Rom. 6:22; Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 1:11). Only a person who is spiritually alive can bear spiritual fruit, that is, holy living (Jn. 15:4-5). The apostle continued, "For when we were controlled by the sinful nature the sinful passions aroused by the Law were at work in our bodies." This describes a believer before he was saved (Rom. 6:20-21). The Law by its prohibitions aroused sinful passions. In that sense unsaved Gentiles were "under" the Law. Consequently their progeny (offspring) was not "fruit to God" but "fruit for death" (Rom. 7:5). Sin, Paul repeatedly affirmed, leads to death (Rom. 5:15, 17, 21; 6:16, 21; 7:10-11, 13; 8:2, 6, 10, 13). "But now," being identified with Christ, believers are dead to the Law. Like a widow released from marital obligations, so believers are "released from the Law." The purpose of this release "from the Law" is "so that" they may "serve" (a better rendering is "be slaves") "in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code." The thought then is that believers do not live by the "oldness" of the Law but by the "newness" of a regenerated spirit, or the Holy Spirit, the Source of new life (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, pgs. 465-466).

(Verses 4-6) – In profession and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works; under the gospel of Christ, not under the law of Moses. The difference is spoken of under the similitude or figure of being married to a new husband. The second marriage is to Christ. By death we are freed from obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her vows to her husband. In our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, and have no more to do with it than the dead servant, who is freed from his master, has to do with his master's yoke. The day of our believing, is

the day of being united to the Lord Jesus. We enter upon a life of dependence on him and duty to him (A Complete Bible Commentary, p. 853).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7 VERSES 7-8

Romans 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 (EXODUS 20:17; DEUT. 5:21). [8] But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. (King James Version)

It now begins to look as if sin and the Law were the same thing – can this be a fact? Of course it cannot. But it must be admitted that I should never have had sin brought home to me but for the Law. For example, I should never have felt guilty of the sin of coveting if I had not heard the Law saying “Thou shalt not covet.” But the sin in me, finding in the commandment an opportunity to express itself, stimulated all my desires. For sin, in the absence of the Law, had no life of its own. (verses 7-8)

(Phillips Translation)

[7] What should we say then? That the law is sin? Not at all! I wouldn't have known what sin was unless the law had told me. The law said, “Do not want what belongs to other people.” (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21) If the law hadn't said that, I would not have known what it was like to want what belonged to others. **[8]** But the commandment gave sin an opportunity. Sin caused me to want all kinds of things that belonged to others. No one can break a law that doesn't exist. **(New International Reader's Version)**

[7] What then do we conclude? Is the Law identical with sin? Certainly not! Nevertheless, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have recognized sin or have known its meaning. [For instance] I would not have known about covetousness [would have had no consciousness of sin or sense of guilt] if the Law had not [repeatedly] said, You shall not covet and have an evil desire [for one thing and another]. [Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21.] **[8]** But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment [to express itself], got a hold on me *and* aroused *and* stimulated all kinds of forbidden desires (lust, covetousness). For without the Law sin is dead [the sense of it is inactive and a lifeless thing]. **(Amplified New Testament)**

[7] “Well then, the Law is something sinful.” Is that what we're going to say? No, we could never say that. But I never would have known what sin is if the Law hadn't taught me. For example, I would never know what a sinful desire is if the Law hadn't said, “You must not have any sinful desires.” **[8]** And so the commandment gave sin its chance, and it stirred up all kinds of sinful desires in my heart. You see, sin is a dead thing when there isn't any law. **(New Testament in Everyday American English)**

But I can hear you say, “If the law code was as bad as all that, it's no better than sin itself.” That's certainly not true. The law code had a perfectly legitimate function. Without its clear guidelines for right and wrong, moral behavior would be mostly

guesswork. Apart from the succinct, surgical command, “You shall not covet, “ I could have dressed covetousness up to look like a virtue and ruined my life with it. (verses 7-8) **(The Message)**

⁷Well then, am I suggesting that these laws of God are evil? Of course not! No, the law is not sinful, but it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known the sin in my heart—the evil desires that are hidden there—if the law had not said, “You must not have evil desires in your heart.” ⁸But sin used this law against evil desires by reminding me that such desires are wrong, and arousing all kinds of forbidden desires within me! Only if there were no laws to break would there be no sinning. **(The Living Bible)**

[7] Then what are we saying? Is the Jewish Law sinful? No, not at all! But it was the Law that showed me what sin is. I did not know it was sin to follow wrong desires, but the Law said, “You must not follow wrong desires.” [8] The Jewish Law made me know how much I was sinning. It showed me how I had a desire for all kinds of things. For without the Law, sin is dead. **(The New Life Testament)**

[7] What shall we conclude then? Is the Law sinful? Of course not! In fact, I wouldn't have known what sin was unless the Law had revealed it to me. For example, I wouldn't have known that it's wrong to eagerly desire what belongs to someone else if the Law hadn't said, “You shall not covet.” [8] But sin, pouncing upon the opening it had when I began thinking about the things the Law said were wrong, caused me to have all kinds of evil desires. When there was no Law, sin was dormant. **(The Last Days Bible)**

Additional Information: (Verse 7) – “Is the law sin?” Paul's declaration that “we have been delivered from the law” (Rom. 7:6) gives rise to the question “is the law sin?” His reaction is one of horror. Then he proceeds to show that the Law of God is good, provided we understand its function, which is to reveal sin and to teach what is right. Powerless in itself to produce righteousness, it exposes sin for what it really is (Spirit Filled Life Bible, p. 1698).

“I had not known sin, but by the law.” In verses 7-13 Paul is dealing with the problem of the relation between law and sin. He argues that even though **sin** used the Law as a means to attack him (verses 7-11), the Law itself is holy and good (verses 12-13). So then, it was not the Law that brought death to him, but sin working through the Law. 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. Paul uses the specific example of the tenth commandment to illustrate what he means (Help for Translators, pgs. 132-133). The longing for that which is evil becomes apparent when the commandment declares: This evil thing is forbidden (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 537). A fifty-five-mile-per-hour sign is not sin, but teaches us the parameters of sin. This too is the function of the law (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 369).

(Verse 8) – “But sin (the indwelling principle of sin), taking occasion by the commandment.” It should be noted that Paul clearly distinguishes between law and sin; law was not intended to be the means by which sin would launch its attack, but sin took advantage of this opportunity to attack man (Help for Translators, p. 134). The Law is not the cause of the act of sin; the principle or nature of sin within an individual is. But the Law's specific commandments stimulate the sin principle into acts that violate the commandments and give those acts the character of transgression (Rom. 4:14; 3:20; 5:13, 20) (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 466).

“For without the law sin was dead.” Paul seems to mean that apart from law sin is inactive (Help for Translators, p. 134). Not nonexistent but not fully perceived (NIV Study Bible, p. 1715). Paul does not say that sin is not committed without law. He is saying that without law sin is not apparent to us. It takes a carpenter's level to make clear how far from straight a board really is (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 537). Apart from the law, sin was dormant, but the law aroused a desire to do that which it forbade (Spirit Filled Life Bible, p. 1698).

(Romans 7-8) - Conclusion: Paul's words indicate a very close connection between sin and the Law. Because of this, one might wrongly conclude that the Law itself is evil and indeed that the Law is

our ultimate problem. Such a conclusion would be welcomed especially by the libertine who would like to do away with the Law altogether. If the Law is sin, then we would be right to reject it altogether.

Two questions arise in Romans 7:7-13. **“Is the Law sin?”** (v. 7) and **“Is the Law responsible for my death?”** (v.13). Both questions, if answered in the affirmative, would imply that the Law is a mistake, something men would be better off without. Paul adamantly rejects both propositions and shows the goodness of the Law and the maliciousness of sin.

Is the Law something evil, something of which we would do well to be rid? Most definitely not! Indeed, the Law is the means by which sin is identified so that we can reckon with sin. Paul insists that he would not have come to know specific sins without their being identified as sin by the Law. The Law marks out the spiritual mine fields which we will encounter in life so that we might avoid them. The Law does not identify that which is good as sin so that we might be kept from enjoying it, but that which is evil so that we might be kept from suffering sin’s consequences. The Law posts warning signs around poisoned waters so that we might not drink of them.

Paul chose a specific sin, and a specific commandment, to illustrate his point that the Law identifies sin. That commandment is: **“You shall not covet”** (Rom. 7:7; Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21). Here Paul is summarizing the commandment which is spelled out in greater detail in the Law. In both Exodus and Deuteronomy where this commandment is recorded, God gives examples of the coveting which was forbidden: coveting your neighbor’s house, his wife, his servant, and so on. This commandment gives us a definition of coveting: to covet is to desire to have that which belongs to another, which cannot legitimately be ours. The command not to covet identifies as sin the desire to wrongfully possess that which belongs to another and instructs those who would obey God not to entertain such evil desires. As good as this commandment is, sin twists and perverts it, using it in such a way as to produce coveting of all kinds. The very commandment not to covet, which was given to reveal the sin of coveting, sin has used to reproduce itself many times over. The commandment which was given to manifest sin was abused by sin to multiply it. Paul’s point is thereby made: The Law is good. Sin is evil, as is evident in the way it uses the Law to produce further sin and death. **The Law is not sin, because the Law reveals sin. Just as an x-ray is not a tumor simply because it reveals a tumor, the Law is not sin because it reveals sin.** That which is good cannot also be evil. The Law is good.

Why did Paul choose the commandment forbidding coveting rather than some other command? Coveting is a matter of the heart. It is not a matter which can be judged by outward appearance. Murder and stealing are visible sins which are immediately apparent to anyone who sees the evidence of a dead body or missing goods. Coveting is a sin of the mind and heart. We can covet, and no one may ever know it. Legalism tends to dwell on externals, while true Christian liberty is a matter of the heart. Paul therefore avoids an external example, choosing instead an invisible, internal sin. Coveting is a root sin which is often the cause of other sins. Coveting in and of itself seems to do no harm to anyone, but it very frequently provides the motivation for stealing and even murder. To put a stop to coveting is to “head other sins off at the pass.” Coveting is a sin which best illustrates Paul’s statement, “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law” (verse 7). Not all sins are crimes. Murder, perjury, and robbery are sins, and they are also considered crimes by society. Almost anywhere in the world, one will find laws against these sins. Society’s laws serve to signal us that if these activities are crimes, they must be wrong. Coveting is a sin which is almost never considered a crime. I know of no government which has a law forbidding coveting. Part of the explanation for this is the difficulty of identifying coveting and proving that this offense has taken place, since it is a sin of the heart and mind. Another reason is that most people do not think coveting is really wrong. In some societies, like our own (USA), many forms of coveting would actually be commended rather than condemned. Television give-away game shows train us to covet things. Capitalism can use covetousness as a positive force which motivates men to work hard in order to earn money. American advertising considers itself successful if it had been able to produce coveting in a potential customer. Coveting comes in many forms.

All of this powerfully demonstrates Paul’s point. Unless God’s law had identified coveting as sin, we would never have recognized it as such. Coveting is like a tumor hidden inside our body. Because it is not external, we do not recognize its deadly existence and nature. The Law is like an x-ray, exposing it for what it is.

The Law is like an x-ray. It cannot cure cancer, but it can point cancer out when we otherwise would not have been aware of its existence and its threat to life. The Law points out sin so that God’s grace and mercy can provide the righteousness we lack in another way – through Jesus Christ.

“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24 NKJV). (The Loveliness of the Law and the Ugliness of Sin, by Bob Deffinbaugh, Th.M.)

A Short Summary: - There is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to repentance, and therefore to peace and pardon, but by trying our hearts and lives by the law. In his own case the apostle would not have known the sinfulness of his thoughts, motives, and actions, but by the law. That perfect standard showed how wrong his heart and life were, proving his sins to be more numerous than he had before thought, but it did not contain any provision of mercy or grace for his relief (A Complete Bible Commentary, p. 853).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7 VERSES 9-11

Romans 7: [9] For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. [10] And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. [11] For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. (King James Version)

⁹ I felt fine when I did not understand what the law demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die. ¹⁰ So the good law, which was supposed to show me the way of life, instead gave me the death penalty. ¹¹ Sin took advantage of the law and fooled me; it took the good law and used it to make me guilty of death. **(New Living Translation)**

[9] I was once living in the absence of the Law, but with the coming of the commandment, sin took on new life – which to me meant death. **[10]** The commandment that was aimed to give life was found to mean death to me **[11]** because sin, by grasping the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and killed me with it. **(Berkeley Version)**

[9] When I did not know about the Law, I was alive; but when the Law came, sin sprang to life, **[10]** and I died. So *God's Law* which was *intended to give* life to me, brought about *spiritual* death instead. **[11]** For sin, using the opportunity given to it by the Law, deceived me, and by it killed me. **(The New Translation)**

[9] I used to be living without *the* law, but when the command came in, sin came to life. **[10]** Then I died. I found that the same command which was supposed to bring life brought death instead! **[11]** Sin took the chance to use the command to take hold of me and kill me with the command. **(The Simple English Bible)**

[9] Once I was alive, but quite apart from *and* unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came, sin lived again and I died (was sentenced by the Law to death). [Ps. 73:22.] **[10]** And the very legal ordinance which was designed and intended to bring life actually proved [to mean to me] death. [Lev. 18:5.] **[11]** For sin, seizing the opportunity *and* getting a hold on me [by taking its incentive] from the commandment, beguiled *and* entrapped *and* cheated me, and using it [as a weapon], killed me. **(Amplified New Testament)**

[9] I was once alive. That was when I did not know what the Law said I had to do. Then I found that I had broken the Law. I knew I was a sinner. Death was mine because of the Law. **[10]** The Jewish Law was supposed to give me new life. Instead,

it gave me death. **[11]** Sin found a way to trap me by working through the Jewish Law. Then sin killed me by using the Law. **(The New Life Testament)**

[9] I was once alive when I knew nothing about the Law. But when I came face-to-face with God's commands, sin came alive in me, and I soon realized I was doomed to death! **[10]** So I found that the very commands that should have led me to life, resulted in death instead. **[11]** My sinful nature seduced me to sin because of the very rules and commands of the Law. So it was really my sinful nature that put me to death by the demands of the Law. **(The Last Days Bible)**

Additional Information: (Verse 9) – “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” This verse records the dawn of conscience in the life of Apostle Paul. He had lived a self-complacent, self-righteous life in which he was free from conviction of sin. It is difficult to say exactly when this period existed in Paul's life. Some have suggested that it was the first thirteen years of Paul's life, before his bar mitzvah ceremony (the ceremony in which a Jewish boy becomes a “son of the commandment” and assumes personal responsibility to keep the commandments of the law). But it may not be necessary to restrict Paul's complacency to those early, unreflecting years of childhood. When the commandment came to him, an apparent reference to “thou shalt not covet” in verse 7, for the first time, Paul became conscious of his lack of ability to keep the law. At that point sin sprang back to life and, says Paul, “I died.” This must be put in contrast with “I was alive without the law” and therefore should be understood as death to his complacent attitude toward sin (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 370).

“I was alive once without the law ... I died.” He was alive, not in the sense of having spiritual life (Rom. 6:11), but in his own estimation. Knowing the law, which promised life for obedience (Rom. 7:10), made Paul realize that law-keeping was required. Trying to obey it made him realize that inwardly, in the desires of his heart (especially coveting, Ro. 7:7-8, the sin forbidden in the tenth commandment), he was constantly breaking the law even before he knew it, and when he saw what he was doing he could not stop it. Thus, Paul writes that sin, the anti-God, anti-law driving force within him, “deceived me, and killed me” (Rom. 7:11). He became convinced that spiritually he was lifeless and lost. Paul offers his personal experience as an index of how sin and law relate in everyone (New Geneva Study Bible, p. 1778).

“When the commandment came.” When Paul began to understand the true requirements of God's moral Law at some point prior to his conversion. **“Sin revived.”** He realized his true condition as a desperately wicked sinner (See 1 Tim. 1:15). **“I died.”** He realized his deadness, spiritually, that all his religious credentials and accomplishments were rubbish (Phil. 3:7-8) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1527).

(Verse 10) – “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” This is a reference to the original purpose of the law. God had declared, “This do, and thou shalt live!” The law was intended to guard and promote life but man could not keep the law. Paul found that unheeded law produced death. The more law of which Paul became aware the more sin he found himself committing. The more sin Paul committed the more convinced he was that one day he would have to pay for that sin. Since “the wages of sin is death,” we learn that the law not only reveals sin but also produces death (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 370).

“The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” See Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 30:15, 19. In itself, the law marks out a path that guarantees God's favor and humanity's happiness. But where sin reigns, the law brings only misery and death (New Geneva Study Bible, p. 1778).

“Which was ordained to life.” Theoretically, perfect obedience to the law could bring eternal life, and with it happiness and holiness. But, no one except Christ has – or could – ever fully obey it (See Rom. 10: 4 KJV) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1527).

(Verse 11) – “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” The deception to which Paul referred was this. Since the commandment was intended unto life, Paul expected the commandment to yield life as a result. But instead it became the occasion for sin and consequent death. Since the commandment yielded the opposite of what Paul expected, he felt deceived. But the perpetrator of this deception was not the commandment itself, but sin. The

commandment was merely the instrument by which sin deceived him (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 370).

“Do and live,” says the Law. But since man himself is incapable of living righteously, he cannot live the life that the Law demands. Only through faith in the crucified and risen Christ is a new life possible (Note from the New Berkeley Version, p. 216).

(Verses 9-11) – (verse 9) The apostle here is talking about his own consciousness of sin. When he was a lad, the content of the Law did not really reach him. He did not understand the true purpose of law. This lack of understanding is not confined to children. An adult like the rich young ruler can assert confidently; “I have observed all these things from my youth” (Mk. 10:20; Mt. 19:20; Lk. 18:21). **(verse 10)** But there came a day in Paul’s life when the particular commandment, “You (sing.) shall not desire that which is forbidden,” hit him right between the eyes. He knows he was desiring the forbidden. Paul became conscious of sin, and he knew that he was spiritually dead. This particular commandment (“Thou shalt not covet”) not only made clear the sinfulness of desiring that which is forbidden but also told him how to live. It reminded him that he was not living the right way. **(verse 11)** Sin had deceived him. As he understood the commandment, the extent of sin’s deception became clear to him. The commandment made Paul see that sin had brought about his death. Sin first deceives and then kills. This order shows how tricky sin is and what is its objective – the eternal ruin of individuals (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, pgs. 537-538).

(Verses 9-11) – Where there is no law, sin is not revealed, because people cannot know that their actions are sinful unless a law forbids those actions. God’s law makes people realize that they are sinners doomed to die, yet it offers no help. Sin is real, and it is dangerous. Imagine a sunny day at the beach. You plunge into the surf; then you notice a sign on the pier: “No swimming. Sharks in water.” Your day is ruined. Is it the sign’s fault? Are you angry with the people who put it up? The law is like the sign. It is essential, and we are grateful for it – but it doesn’t get rid of the sharks (Life Application Bible, p. 2040).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7 VERSES 12-13

Romans 7: [12] Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. [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. (King James Version)

¹² Still, the Law and its commands are holy and correct and good. ¹³ Am I saying that something good caused my death? Certainly not! It was sin that killed me by using something good. Now we can see how terrible and evil sin really is. **(Contemporary English Version)**

It can scarcely be doubted that the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, fair and good. Can it be that something that is intrinsically good could mean death to me? No, what happened was this. Sin, at the touch of the Law, was forced to show itself as sin, and *that* meant death for me. The contact of the Law showed the utterly sinful nature of sin. (verses 12-13) **(Phillips Translation)**

[12] So then, the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, right, and good. **[13]** Does this mean that what is good brought about my death? By no means! It was sin that did it; by using what is good, sin brought death to me in order that its true nature as sin might be revealed. And so, by means of the commandment, sin is shown to be even more terribly sinful. **(Today’s English Version)**

[12] So the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, right, and good. **[13]** Now, did this good thing kill me? Certainly not! But sin, in order to be recognized

as sin, clearly used this good thing to kill me, so that sin through the commandment would become extremely sinful. **(God’s Word to the Nations)**

[12] So then, the Law is holy, and God’s commandment is holy, just, and good.

[13] Does this mean, then, that something good brought death to me? Of course not! But so that the utter sinfulness of sin could be seen, it used something good, *the Law*, to bring about my death. And so it is that the sinfulness of sin is *revealed* by God’s Law.

(The New Translation)

[12] For this reason the law is holy. The commands are holy, fair and good. [13] Did what was for my good become death *for me*? Never! But, so that sin would look like sin, sin worked through what was for my good *to bring* death! Sin would become very, very sinful through the command. **(The Simple English Version)**

Additional Information: (Verses 12-13) – “Wherefore the law is holy” (v. 12). From what Paul has just said in verses 7-11, we might expect a totally different conclusion. But since the law intrinsically and originally was intended to guide men to life, it is therefore a holy law, just and good. Paul then expands on the principle that it is sin which is the deceiver and not the law. “Was then that which is good made death unto me?” (v. 13). His vigorous denial is again, “God forbid.” It is sin that works death using the instrument of the law and the purpose is that sin might be shown to be sin. Death is brought by sin, even though the instrumentality of the law is good (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 370).

The principle of sin, not the Law, becomes death to an individual (Rom. 5:12). But sin uses the commandment, the good thing, as an agent or instrument to keep on producing death in a person and thereby sin is seen as exceedingly sinful. The internal principle or nature of sin uses the specific commandments of the Law of God – in part and in the whole; a “holy, righteous, and good” thing in itself – to manifest its true nature as opposed to God and to demonstrate its power within individuals (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 467).

(Verse 13) – Paul is saying that one cannot see how evil sin is until he realizes that sin takes what is good, that is, a divine command, and uses this to bring death to men (Help for Translators, p. 136). Sin seized the opportunity afforded it when the law showed me what was right and what was wrong, without supplying the power to do the former and avoid the latter (a power which law was never designed to supply). Sin forced me against my better judgment to do what the law showed me to be wrong, and thus involved me in condemnation and death (Tyndale NT Commentary, p. 150). Sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful. An awareness of the true nature of sin and its deadly character, which brings the sinner to see his need of salvation – the very purpose God intended the law to serve (Gal. 3:19-22) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1527).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

VERSES 14-17

Romans 7: [14] ¶ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. [15] For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. [16] If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. [17] Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (King James Version)

¹⁴The law is good, then. The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master. ¹⁵I don’t understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But I can’t help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things. **(New Living Translation)**

¹⁴We know that the Law is spiritual. But I am merely a human, and I have been sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵In fact, I don’t understand why I act the way I do. I don’t do

what I know is right. I do the things I hate. ¹⁶ Although I don't do what I know is right, I agree that the Law is good. ¹⁷ So I am not the one doing these evil things. The sin that lives in me is what does them. **(Contemporary English Version)**

I can anticipate the response that is coming: "I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" Yes. I'm full of myself – after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary. But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! **(The Message)**

¹⁴The law is good, then, and the trouble is not there but with *me* because I am sold into slavery with Sin as my owner. ¹⁵I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to—what I hate. ¹⁶I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. ¹⁷But I can't help myself because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things. **(The Living Bible)**

[14] We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am a creature of the flesh [carnal, unspiritual], having been sold into slavery under [the control of] sin. **[15]** For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns]. **[16]** Now if I do [habitually] what is contrary to my desire, [that means that] I acknowledge and agree that the Law is good (morally excellent) and that I take sides with it. **[17]** However, it is no longer I who do the deed, but the sin [principle] which is at home in me and has possession of me. **(Amplified New Testament)**

Additional Information: (Verse 14) – "I am carnal" (Lit. "of flesh"). This means earthbound, mortal, and still incarcerated in unredeemed humanness. Paul does not say he is still "in the flesh," but the flesh is in him (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1528). **"Sold under sin."** Sin no longer controls the whole man (as with the unbeliever; Rom. 6:6), but it can hold captive the believer's members, or his fleshly body (Rom. 7:23, 18). Sin contaminates him and frustrates his inner desire to obey the will of God (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1528). Paul is describing a conflict between a person alone against the power of sin, showing that we cannot attain justification, holiness, goodness, and sanctification by our own endeavor to resist sin and keep God's law. The conflict of the Christian is a conflict between a person in union with the Holy Spirit and the power of sin (Gal. 5:16-18). In Romans chapter 8 Paul describes the way to victory. In Romans 7 Paul is demonstrating the insufficiency of the law to redeem us apart from grace. Those who attempt to obey God's commandments without the saving grace of Christ find themselves unable to accomplish the good intentions of their heart. They are not their own master; evil and sin rule within them. They are slaves to them (Rom. 7:15-21) and are brought "into captivity to the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23). Only in Christ will God with every temptation "make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13) (Full Life Study Bible, pgs. 327-328).

(Verse 15) - "But what I hate, that do I." The failure to achieve his purpose is found in the fact that he is attempting in his own strength that which can only be accomplished in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit (Wuest's Word Studies, p. 121). Paul is a man living simultaneously on two planes, eagerly longing to live a life in keeping with the higher plane, but sadly aware of the strength of indwelling sin that keeps on pulling him down to the lower plane. The day will come when this present order will pass, when the new age will be established in glory, and then the tension between the two ages will be resolved. But so long as Christians live 'between the times,' Paul's words in another Epistle retain their full relevance: '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' (Gal. 5:17). The present passage (Rom. 7) leads up to a paean of triumph, although it begins with a sad confession of inability. The

inability persists only so long as 'I myself' – that is, I in my own strength – fight the battle. So long as I do that, says Paul, I may serve the law of God with my mind, but my body willy-nilly goes on rendering obedience to the law of sin (Tyndale NT Commentary, pg. 151, 152, 153).

(Verse 17) – “Now then it is no more I that do it.” The Greek adverb for “no longer” signifies a complete and permanent change. Paul's new inner self, the new “I,” no longer approved of the sin that was still residing in his flesh, like his old self did (Rom. 7:22; Gal. 2:20), but rather, strongly disapproved. Many have misconstrued Paul's comments as abdicating personal responsibility for his sin by embracing a form of Greek dualism (which would later spawn Gnosticism). Dualism taught that the body is evil and the spirit is good, so its adherents sinned with impunity by claiming they were not responsible; their sin was entirely the product of their physical bodies, while their spirits remained untouched and unsullied. But the apostle has already acknowledged personal guilt for his sin (Rom. 7:14; 1 Jn. 1:10) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1528). **“But sin that dwelleth in me.”** His sin does not flow out of his new redeemed innermost self (“I”), but from his unredeemed humanness, his flesh “in me” (Gal. 5:17) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1528). This does not mean Paul was avoiding personal responsibility for his actions; he was speaking of the conflict between his desires and the indwelling principle of sin within him (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 468).

(Verses 14-25) – Some interpret this chronicle of Paul's inner conflict as describing his life before Christ. They point out that Paul describes the person as “sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14); as having “nothing good” in him (Rom. 7:18); and as a “wretched man” trapped in a “body of death” (Rom. 7:24). Those descriptions seem to contradict the way Paul describes the believer in Romans chapter 6 (Rom. 6: 2, 6, 7, 11, 17, 18, 22). However, it is correct to understand Paul here to be speaking about a believer. This person desires to obey God's law and hates his sin (Rom. 7:15, 19, 22); he is humble, recognizing that nothing good dwells in his humanness (Rom. 7:18); he sees sin in himself, but not all that is there (Rom. 7:17, 20-22); and he serves Jesus Christ with his mind (Rom. 7:25). Paul has already established that none of those attitudes ever describe the unsaved (Rom. 1:18-21, 32; 3:10-20). Paul's use of present tense verbs in verses 14-25 strongly supports the idea that he is describing his life currently as a Christian. For those reasons, it seems certain that chapter 7 describes a believer. However, of those who agree that this is a believer, there is still disagreement. Some see a carnal, fleshly Christian; others a legalistic Christian, frustrated by his feeble attempts in his own power to please God by keeping the Mosaic Law. But the personal pronoun “I” refers to the apostle Paul, a standard of spiritual health and maturity. So in verses 14-25, Paul must be describing all Christians – even the most spiritual and mature – who, when they honestly evaluate themselves against the righteous standard of God's Law, realize how far short they fall. He does so in a series of laments (Rom. 7:14-17, 18-20, 21-23, 24, 25) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, pgs. 1527-1528).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

VERSES 18-20

Romans 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. [19] For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [20] Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (King James Version)

¹⁸ Yes, I know that nothing good lives in me—I mean nothing good lives in the part of me that is earthly and sinful. I want to do the things that are good, but I do not do them. ¹⁹ I do not do the good things I want to do, but I do the bad things I do not want to do. ²⁰ So if I do things I do not want to do, then I am not the one doing them. It is sin living in me that does those things. **(New Century Version)**

¹⁸ I know that my selfish desires won't let me do anything that is good. Even when I want to do right, I cannot. ¹⁹ Instead of doing what I know is right, I do wrong. ²⁰

And so, if I don't do what I know is right, I am no longer the one doing these evil things. The sin that lives in me is what does them. **(Contemporary English Version)**

I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. **(The Message)**

[18] For I know that within me, that is within my flesh, what is good is not at home; the personal willingness is there but not the accomplishing of what is right. **[19]** For I fail to do the good I want to do and I practice the bad that I do not want to practice. **[20]** But if I do what I have no desire to do, then I am no longer doing it myself, but rather sin that makes itself at home in me. **(Berkeley Version)**

For in me (that is, in my flesh) no good dwells, I know; the wish is there, but not the power of doing what is right. I cannot be good as I desire to be, and I do wrong against my wishes. Well, if I act against my wishes, it is not I who do the deed but sin that dwells within me. (verses 18-20) **(Moffatt Translation)**

[18] For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. [I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.] **[19]** For I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am [ever] doing. **[20]** Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it [it is not myself that acts], but the sin [principle] which dwells within me [fixed and operating in my soul]. **(Amplified New Testament)**

[18] Yes, I know that nothing good lives in me – I mean nothing good lives in the part of me that is not spiritual. I want to do the things that are good. But I don't do those things. **[19]** I don't do the good things that I want to do. I do the bad things that I don't want to do. **[20]** So if I do things I don't want to do, then it is not really me doing those things. It is sin living in me that does those bad things. **(The Easy-to-Read New Testament)**

Additional Information: (Verse 18) – “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” Although Paul does believe that sin may launch its attack against man through his body, he certainly did not think of one's physical being as evil in itself. Rather he seems to be speaking of that aspect of one's self which refuses submission to the Spirit of God. Evidently Paul is contrasting the flesh with the desire to do good that is in him. As pointed out earlier, this is in keeping with the Jewish belief in two impulses that try to control man's life, an evil impulse and a good impulse. The desperateness of Paul's situation is demonstrated by the fact that, even though he desires to do good, he is not able to do it (Help for Translators, p. 139).

“Flesh” as the word is used here, denotes man subject to sin and also prone to sin. Only he who lives under the control of the Holy Spirit can be victorious over the control of the flesh, Gal. 5:16-18 (New Berkeley Version NT, p. 216).

(Verses 18-20) – “The devil made me do it.” “I didn't do it; the sin in me did it.” These sound like good excuses, but we are responsible for our actions. We must never use the power of sin or Satan as an excuse, because they are defeated enemies. Without Christ's help, sin is stronger than we are, and sometimes we are unable to defend ourselves against its attacks. That is why we should never stand up to sin all alone. Jesus Christ, who has conquered sin once and for all, promises to fight by our side. If we look to him for help, we will not have to give in to sin (Life Application Bible, p. 2040).

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

VERSES 21-25

Romans 7: [21] I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. [22] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [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. [24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [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. **(King James Version)**

²¹ So I have learned this rule: When I want to do good, evil is there with me. ²² In my mind, I am happy with God's law. ²³ But I see another law working in my body, which makes war against the law that my mind accepts. That other law working in my body is the law of sin, and it makes me its prisoner. ²⁴ What a miserable man I am! Who will save me from this body that brings me death? ²⁵ I thank God for saving me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So in my mind I am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful self I am a slave to the law of sin. **(New Century Version)**

The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different. (verses 21-25) **(The Message)**

So this is my experience of the Law: I desire to do what is right, but wrong is all that I can manage; I cordially agree with God's law, so far as my inner self is concerned, but then I find another law in my members which conflicts with the law of my mind and makes me a prisoner to sin's law that resides in my members. (Thus, left to myself, I serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.) Miserable wretch that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? God will! Thanks be to him through Jesus Christ our Lord! **(Moffatt Translation)**

[21] So I find it to be a law (rule of action of my being) that when I want to do what is right *and* good, evil is ever present with me *and* I am subject to its insistent demands. [22] For I endorse *and* delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [with my new nature]. [Psa. 1:2.] [23] But I discern in my bodily members [in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh] a different law (rule of action) at war against the law of my mind (my reason) and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs [in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh]. [24] O unhappy *and* pitiable *and* wretched man that I am! Who will release *and* deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death? [25] O thank God! [He will!] through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) our Lord! So then indeed I, of my self with the mind *and* heart, serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. **(Amplified New Testament)**

[21] This has become my way of life: When I want to do what is right, I always do what is wrong. [22] My mind and heart agree with the Law of God. [23] But there is a different law at work deep inside of me that fights with my mind. This law of sin holds me in its power because sin is still in me. [24] There is no happiness in me! Who can

set me free from my sinful old self? [25] God's Law has power over my mind, but sin still has power over my sinful old self. I thank God I can be free through Jesus Christ our Lord! **(The New Life Testament)**

[21] So I've discovered the rule, that, when I want to do what's right, evil is always there to pull me down. [22] In my heart, I take delight in the Law God has given us thru Moses. [23] But I find another law working within me, fighting against what my mind wants. It's the sinful nature within me, bringing me into captivity to do what it wants me to do. [24] Oh, what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that's taking me to death? [25] Thank God! There is abundant deliverance thru Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, to sum up what I've just said: As for myself, my mind is set and determined to obey God's laws, but if I depend on my own strength to do so, I will buckle under and serve the law of sin. **(The Last Days Bible)**

Additional Information: (Verses 21-25) – Whether Paul is describing a Christian or non-Christian experience has been hotly debated through the centuries. Both thoughts contain truth, especially when you consider that both justification and sanctification are a two-fold aspect of the work of redemption.

In favor of the view that Paul is describing Christian experience are: (1) the use of the present tense throughout the passage; (2) Paul's humble opinion of himself (Rom. 7:18); (3) his high regard for God's law (Rom. 7:14, 16); (4) the location of this passage in the section of Romans where Paul is dealing with sanctification – the growth of the Christian in holiness (NIV Study Bible, p. 1716). This view can be summarized in the following way:

The believer's justified, new inner self no longer sides with sin, but joyfully agrees with the law of God against sin (Psa. 1:2; 119:14, 47, 77, 105, 140; Rom. 7:22). But this principle, which Paul identifies as "the law of sin," operates in the members of his body – that is, his unredeemed and still sinful humanness – waging war against his desire to obey God's law. In frustration and grief, Paul laments his sin (Psa. 130:1-5). Paul longed to be rescued from his sinful flesh (Rom. 7:24; 8:23), which has its base of operation in the body. Paul is certain that Christ has rescued him through the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1529).

That Paul is speaking of the non-Christian life is suggested by: (1) the use of phrases such as "sold as a slave to sin" (Rom. 7:14), "I know that nothing good lives in me" (Rom. 7:18) and "What a wretched man I am!" (Rom. 7:24) – which do not seem to describe Christian experience; (2) the contrast between Romans 7 and 8, make it difficult for the other view to be credible; (3) the problem of the value of conversion if one ends up in spiritual misery. This view can be summarized in the following way:

To say that this was describing Paul's present life is to say that it's natural for a person claiming to be a Christian to continue living in sin. But in the previous chapter (Rom. 6), Paul clearly states the fact that those who live in sin (as their master) will not receive eternal life, but will be consigned to death – the second death. Paul says the same thing in Romans chapter 8. Notice how emphatic Paul is about the fact that a true Christian lives a life that is pleasing to God (not perfection but a new direction). It's true that we cannot live to please God in our own strength. We need God's grace and Spirit.

No one can walk in two directions at the same time. No one can repent towards God (See Acts 20:21) and live in sin (as its master). One can walk in only one direction! If he lives for God, even though imperfectly, he is a Christian. He may stumble at times, and even have a bad fall. But if his heart's true desire and determination is to live to please God, he is walking in one direction.

Romans chapter 7 is addressed to Jews, possibly Christian Jews who were still trying to add to their justification by Mosaic Law keeping as verses 1-4 clearly indicate. In verse 9 Paul takes himself back to his "bar mitzvah" (son of the Law or Commandment) experience at age 13. Before the Law was applied to him he was alive in the sense of having no guilt or condemnation. But when he became morally responsible before God under the Mosaic Law, his sin nature rebelled and brought guilt and condemnation. Paul goes on to describe his struggle and failure as a Jew, under the Law, trying to keep its spiritual and moral meaning. He is describing the conflict that a Jew has with the sin nature when trying to live for God under the Law of Moses, as verses 7-8 clearly state. Paul so clearly states in verse 25 that he, at this writing, as a Christian, was no longer living the defeated life he described in the previous verses (The Last Days Bible, pgs. 252-253).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SPECIAL THANKS AND APPRECIATION FOR THE FOLLOWING TRANSLATIONS AND THEIR TRANSLATORS

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

(Romans Chapter 7)

Instructions for Group Leader: Do not let the group read the following questions and answers. The leader of your group should ask the group the following questions and encourage the group to discover the answers by going to the appropriate Scriptures. **Discuss and answer (as a group) the questions correctly by using the Scripture(s). Turn to Romans Chapter 7.**

1. **Read Romans 7:1.** How long does the Law exercise authority over an individual? As long as the individual is alive.

2. **Read Romans 7:2.** What looses a married individual from the law of marriage? Death.

3. **Read Romans 7:3.** If a woman's husband dies and she marries another man, is she an adulteress? No, she is free from the law of marriage. Death has freed her.

4. **Read Romans 7:4.** The Living Bible states, "Your 'husband,' your master, used to be the Jewish law; but you 'died' as it were, with Christ on the cross" (Rom. 7:4). Are you married to the Law any longer? No.

5. **Read Romans 7:4.** Who are you now free to be married to? Him who is raised from dead, that is, Jesus Christ.

6. **Read Romans 7:4.** What is the result of your union with Jesus Christ? Producing good fruit, good deeds for God, being productive for Him.

7. **Read Romans 7:5.** Paul states that when we were "in the flesh" the motions of sins brought forth fruit resulting in what? Spiritual death.

8. **Read Romans 7:7.** The Law showed me what? The depths of my sin.
9. **Read Romans 7:10.** Instead of the Law giving me eternal life, it resulted in what? Spiritual death.
10. **Read Romans 7:13.** It was sin that actually brought spiritual death, but sin used the commandments to: a. cause sin to appear as sin. b. make sin appear as being exceeding sinful. c. all of the above.
11. **Read Romans 7:14-15.** How does Romans 7:15 describe being “sold under sin”? I don’t do what I would like to do but instead do what I hate.
12. **Read Romans 7:18.** Can your own “will power” defeat sin? No. It takes God’s grace and Spirit (Rom. 8:2).
13. **Read Romans 7:23.** Every true believer delights in the Law of God or the ways of God. However, another principle is at work in a person’s members attacking his or her mind bringing him into captivity to what? The law of sin which is in his members.
14. **Read Romans 8:2.** The only way to overcome a law, such as gravity, is to apply another law, such as lift or aerodynamics. The only way to overcome “the law of sin” is to apply what law? The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.
15. **Read Romans 7:24-25.** The personal pronoun “I” is used all throughout Romans chapter 7. The Holy Spirit is absent. Paul discovers that the Christian life is not only hard to live, it is impossible to live. He is now calling on *Whom* to deliver him from the law of sin and its dominion? God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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