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## **Romans 7**

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Romans 7.

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### Topics.

- Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
- The new life of the Spirit.
- Paul's battle between the flesh and the mind.
- You shall not covet.
- Sin through the commandment, deceived me and killed me.
- The law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.
- It is no-longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.
- I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind.
- O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

**The previous chapter:** Paul's entire focus in the previous chapter was on how those in Christ should live he raised the question Are Christians to sin because they are not under law but under grace? And then explained that though they are saved by grace and set free from sin, they should not to use grace as an excuse to live a lifestyle of impurity and lawlessness, but rather live a life of integrity, justice, honesty and doing what is right to honour God and the name of Christ.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### ROMANS 7:1-6

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#### Are we to continue in Sin that Grace may Abound?

- **Romans 7:1-6:** Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup>Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. <sup>3</sup>Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. <sup>4</sup>Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> For while we were living in the flesh our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. <sup>6</sup>But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.
- Remember this is a letter Paul is writing to the Christian brothers in Rome.

The words, "Or do you not know" (v1) links back to the previous chapter in which Paul was teaching that righteousness is apart from the law and that it is by faith that those trusting in Christ are made righteous and highlighting the truth that God counts their faith as righteousness and not the law or self-effort and any works they might do. The words, "I am speaking to those who know the law (v1) refer to the Jewish brothers (v4).

**Two husbands, the law and grace:** at the foot of Mount Sinai, the Jews entered into a covenant with God to obey the law and agreed to accept the blessings and the curses that came with the law thus they have in this sense been married to the law for over four-thousand years. Paul in these verses is pointing out that the law is only binding on a person as long as they are alive, his primary focus is the Jews, but the message applies to any person affected by the law. He is telling the Jewish brothers in Rome just as a woman who is bound to her husband by the law is set free from that law if her husband dies likewise, they are set free from Moses law and all its customs to belong to Jesus Christ. In a sense there are two husbands, the law and Christ.

**The first husband:** is the law which states, "Whoever transgresses any detail of the law will be judged condemned and sentenced to death, because the wages of sin is death" (sin is any transgression of the law) (Rom. 6:23).

**The second husband:** is the Lord Jesus Christ who proclaims through the Gospel that whoever has faith in him will be counted righteous, worthy and granted eternal life in the Kingdom of God because of their faith.

**The new life of the Spirit:** Paul earlier in this letter stated, "Where there is no law there is no transgression and that sin is not counted where there is no law" (Rom. 4:15) showing that it is the law that declares the passions within our human nature sinful and that without the law they could not be declared unlawful and we could not be held guilty since the Scriptures state "Sin is not counted where there is no law" (Rom. 5:13). Paul is saying, even though the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that work within our corrupted fallen human nature limit us from attaining to the perfect standard of God's Holiness are made know to us by the law they still continue to work within our members and for this reason it is impossible for anyone to keep the entire law perfectly and therefore the law holds us all captive to its final verdict of guilty and its judgement of condemnation to eternal death. Paul is telling his Jewish brothers in Christ that their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ sets them free from the law and free from its condemnation and therefore they are not to serve God by legalistically demanding that a strict and impossible set of laws be maintained or serve God under the old written code, but rather are to serve the Lord in the new life of the Spirit. Paul is saying that those in Christ are to serve God in a different way which Paul calls, the new life of the Spirit, under the old life of the law the Jews served God by legalistically maintaining the laws and customs of Moses because the law demanded it, but under the new life of the Spirit (the way of love, compassion and mercy) those in Christ desire to honour God not because a law demands it, but because they know the overflowing and majestic love God has toward them, they know the grace and mercy of God in their lives and that their righteousness is imputed to them by God as a pure and free gift because of their faith in His Son. They are fully assured that in Christ God's eternal favour is toward them and that Christ loves and died for them so that by their faith in him and not the law they will be counted worthy and granted everlasting life in the eternal Kingdom of God. Paul is saying to his Jewish brothers and sisters in Rome that it is out of this amazing love and this abundant grace that they are to serve God and not by demanding legalistic rules, laws and traditions.

**The covenant of marriage and the law:** Paul uses the covenant of marriage which binds a woman to her husband while he is alive, but if he dies the covenant has no power over her and she is free to marry again to clearly show the Jewish brothers in Rome that in Christ they have died to the Old Testament covenant meaning they have been set free from the laws of Moses with all its customs and are therefore free to embrace (marry) another Covenant (i.e. the Good News of the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ and grace). Paul is telling the Jews that they have died (been set free) from the law that declares all guilty because all have sinned and which held them captive to condemnation because of the sinful aberrations and dysfunctions dwelling within our fallen and corrupted human nature which limits us all from living a life free from sin, which

means before the law we are all rightfully and legally guilty. Paul is shining a spotlight on the fact that the law makes a person aware of sinful passions working within them which if outwardly acted on condemns us all to death (Rom. 6:23) to highlight the glory and majesty of the Good News of the Gospel which proclaims:

- Those in Christ have been set free from the law and are released from its power of condemnation (Rom. 6:23).

This means those in Christ are to serve God not by the legalistic demands of the letter of the law, but by the new life of the Spirit which is love, compassion and mercy etc., contrasted to legalism.

**A married woman will be called an adulteress if she Lives with another man:** the words, "A married woman will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive" (v3) does not apply to a woman who has remarried after suffering a marriage breakdown and for whatever reason the marriage relationship has ended in divorce for the following two reasons:

1. Divorce by the law is considered the same as if the husband had died.
2. This entire message of Paul is about following the new life of the Spirit which is compassion and mercy and not the legalistic written code of the law.

Sadly, many Christian women throughout history who have been held captive to the written letter of the law have suffered enormous abuse by domineering and controlling husbands, and many have found the happiness they deserve in a second marriage to a man who treats them with kindness and tender affection.

**NOTE:** the focus is a married woman living with another man, not a divorced woman (embracing the idea of a woman having an affair, etc.).

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## ROMANS 7:7-13

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### Paul's Battle between the Flesh and the Mind.

- **Romans 7:7-13:** What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin (Lust in the KJV). I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."<sup>8</sup>But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead.<sup>9</sup>I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.<sup>10</sup>The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.<sup>11</sup>For sin seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.<sup>12</sup>So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.<sup>13</sup>Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

**You shall not covet:** it is futile to attempt to attain to righteousness by keeping the law for the following two reasons:

1. The law states: "You shall not *covet* your neighbour's house; you shall not *covet* your neighbour's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's." In modern language this means, "You shall not *covet* any other persons house, their wife or husband, or anyone's very successful business, their riches and wealth, their new car, their beautiful boat or anything that belongs to any other person" (Exod. 20:17).
2. God's Royal law states: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Rom. 13:9).

Jesus said all the commandments regarding mankind are summed up in the words of the Royal law (James 2:8) because the spirit underpinning the Royal law, desires the best for others contrasted to the spirit underlying coveting which is craving and seeking the best for self.

**Covet:** (covetousness) means; to set the heart upon, to desire, long for or lust after (rightfully or otherwise) it carries the idea of holding onto or desiring more than one has or needs (the practice of greediness) and embraces those who live a lifestyle of unlawful sex, orgies adulteries and sexual immorality to fulfil their own lust and to anyone whose heart is craving after and worshipping and exalting another person as a god (an Idolater).

**By implication covet:** can refer to those who are not honest and true and who use pressure or coercion to force or entice others to fulfil their own selfish need or ambition and to anyone who intentionally deprives somebody of money or property by dishonest means because they are greedy and eager for gain. The commandment, "You shall not covet" exposes human selfishness, pride, ego, lust, and greed etc. It reveals the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that are imbedded within our fallen corrupted human nature that hinder us from attaining to the perfection of God's Holy law. It exposes our self-centeredness in our desires for more than we need, our excessive avariciousness toward materialism, our overeating of tasty foods the craving to be important or esteemed, our sensual and lustful thoughts, the desire to be rich and have abundantly more than we need etc.

The commandments, "You shall not covet" and "Love your neighbour as yourself," shines a spotlight on our self-interest, they highlight our lack of willingness to give to those less fortunate and those in need, they expose our degrading, resentful, bitter and jealous thoughts of others and the list goes on. In summary the command, "You shall not covet" embraces all those attitudes and thoughts that dwell within our members that are contrary to the law of love and the holiness of God which means the entire human race is held guilty before the law and therefore it legally has the right and the power to condemn us all to death which it does without hesitation, compassion or mercy the law shows no mercy or compassion its demand on those that are under it is strictly official, formal and legal and enforced without compassion or any sense of sorrow toward its condemned victims. The universal demand of the law states; "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) meaning if anyone fails to keep the law in any aspect, they are guilty of breaking the law. It then without mercy rightfully and legally judges and sentences its guilty victims (all mankind) to death. A wise scholar wrote: "the law is splendid as a guide to an understanding of God's will, but as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure, but God always knew it would be, not because of a fault in the law but because a flaw in us". This truth shines a brilliant spotlight upon the royal majesty, the wonder and the glory of the Good News of the Gospel which states:

- God through Christ has cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands (the debt being all our trespasses and sins) (Col. 2:13-14).

**Is the law of sin:** since the law made Paul aware of sin he raises the question, "Is the law sinful?" (v7). If there was no law there would be no sin and therefore Paul would not be held guilty and condemned. The answer of course is obvious of course the law is not sinful, but rather is righteous holy and good, nevertheless the law does shine a floodlight on sin that is imbedded in our body (i.e. selfishness, ego, pride, greed, sensual thoughts envy etc.), are all embraced in the word covet. Paul is saying, if he did not know the law sin lies dead, because where there is no law there can be no transgression against it, but as soon as Paul was made aware of the law, sin rose its ugly head and held him up against the laws holy standard which states, 'You shall not covet' which then clearly revealed to Paul that there were many forms of covetousness dwelling within him and therefore the righteous, perfect and holy law was now legally and rightfully able to declared him guilty and condemn him to death.

**Sin through the commandment, deceived me and killed me:** Paul states, "Sin seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me" (v11).

Prior to knowing the law Paul was alive in the sense he was not a condemned man, but as soon as the law said, "You shall not covet" he was as good as dead meaning that the righteous, perfect and holy law which in itself has the power to bring life, peace and harmony to all mankind because it is perfect cannot achieve its goal because unlike the law no human is perfect and therefore the law is limited by our sinful human dysfunctions and aberrations called sin that are imbedded in our fallen and corrupted human nature. It is in this way that the law which should have brought life actually brings death, since all are held guilty before it and therefore condemned, nevertheless it is not the law that is responsible for bringing death to us, but the sin that is imbedded in our fallen human nature. The law has not failed in its mission in fact it is enormously successful since its purpose is to shine a mega spotlight on all the sinful dysfunctions, aberrations, attitudes and thoughts that are imbedded in our fallen corrupted human nature and in achieving this the law cannot be faulted.

**That sin through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure:** the words, "In order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure" (v13) means that the purpose of the law is to reveal the abundance of sin that is imbedded in our hearts, minds, attitudes and thoughts and to reveal our selfishness and pride etc. This means that as those in Christ get closer to knowing God they will become far more aware of the abundance of sin lurking in every dark corner of their human body, much of which remains hidden until a certain circumstance causes it to rise its ugly head from the bottomless depth of our fallen nature. Perhaps some have noticed that when the emotions are stirred in a negative manner the first outward response is often from the flesh (i.e. anger, shouting, verbally attacking etc.) and not from the spirit (i.e. from compassion, kindness, mercy and love etc.) this reality simply shows that lurking deep within the dark corners of our inward being is that evil entity the Bible calls sin (sometimes referred to as the devil).

**Examples of coveting:** since it may be difficult for some to understand what kind of things the faithful serving God might be coveting the following are just a few possible suggestions that those serving God from an honest and faithful heart might be envious of:

- Perhaps of teachers who do not have to suffer the danger, rejection and persecution that they are suffering.
- Perhaps the ability of others who are able to speak far more skilfully and fluently than they are able.
- Perhaps of prideful false teachers who are esteemed and considered important and famous by their followers while they are looked upon as being lowly.
- Perhaps of those who have a home, a wife, wealth and plenty of food
- Perhaps of married Christian men who are able take their wives to comfort them emotionally and sexually on their missionary journeys.
- Perhaps the enormous success of certain hypocritical, legalistic religious leaders.
- Perhaps of Christians who simply enjoy their faith and the comforts of this world without any of the stress of ministry.

Even if we are free of all of these there is still a multitude of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that are imbedded in our minds, our thoughts our wrongful attitudes, our pride and our selfishness which simply shine a spotlight on the truth that whether we are a faithful minister before the Lord or simply a brother or sister living in faith as we go about the mundane things of life not one of us can stand before God and claim we are without sin.

**The condemning power of sin:** once Paul understood the commandment, "You shall not covet" it revealed to him an endless array of sinful, thoughts, attitudes and impulses within his own inward corrupted fallen human nature and on this revelation sin arose in all its power and held Paul accountable before the law which legally and rightfully condemned him to death and he died, in the sense that he knew it was hopeless to attain to the standard the law requires. Because of this knowledge he knows he is left without hope before the law since not even the knife of the most skilful surgeon is able to remove the sinful impulses from within the human body. Even though the law looks wonderfully righteous and holy (which it is) it deceived Paul because instead of giving the righteous life it promises it revealed his inability to keep attain to it and therefore gave sin the power to have him declared guilty, condemned and sentenced to death. The deception of the law is that it appears gloriously beautiful, righteous holy and promises mortal and eternal life to anyone who can attain to it, but in reality, its fruit to all who stand before it is death with all its miseries because no-one can attain to its high standards thus the deception.

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## ROMANS 7:14-23

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### **The Law is Spiritual, but I am of the Flesh, Sold under Sin.**

**Romans 7:14-23:** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh sold under sin. <sup>15</sup>I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. <sup>17</sup>So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>21</sup>So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being <sup>23</sup>but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

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The law is spiritual means that it is righteous, holy, perfect and good, whereas our fallen human nature (called the flesh in the Bible) has imbedded within it all sorts of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that infect our minds, our thoughts, our attitudes etc., of which some are selfishness, pride, ego, greed, sensual thoughts, envy, jealousy, bitterness, resentment etc., these are all contrary to the law of righteousness, the law of love and of God's holy character. Sadly, these dysfunctions and aberrations limit us from attaining to the perfect standard of the law. Paul is saying that he sees within his own nature the following two laws:

1. One that would love to perfectly keep the law.
2. On that limits him from attaining to the first law, since he finds as much as he wishes to be perfect before the law and by extension before God, he clearly recognises that there is an opposing law (or power) that works within him and prevents him from achieving the perfection he desires because he finds that in some of his actions he does those things that he would prefer not to.

**It is no-longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me:** the word evil in this context refers to that part of the essential character that has degenerated from its original virtue and become worthless, depraved and morally corrupt. Paul is saying that when he does actions that are contrary to the law and he does not want to do them, then he is agreeing with the law that the law is good, righteous and correct so he concludes the problem is not in the law therefore it must be some flaw in him which of course is sin thus the reason for the words:

- It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me (v20).

Meaning it is not the true and authentic-self (the Spirit) of Paul doing those things but sin that is imbedded in his fallen and corrupted human nature. Paul is very aware that within his own body there are the following two natures:

1. The flesh (the lower nature) which is our fallen and corrupted human nature with all its sinful dysfunctions and aberrations imbedded into it.
2. The Spirit (the higher nature) which is that nature of God which desires to attain to the perfection of the law and God's holiness.

Paul recognises that these two natures are at total odds to each other, the flesh has nothing good in it, since it does not want to be accountable to anyone and left free to go its own way whereas the Spirit desires to honour God. Paul desires in his mind to attain to the standard of the law, but realises that there is another law or force working within his corrupted fallen human nature that works against his mind and prevents him from attaining to the righteousness the law demands; it is this power or force that Paul calls sin (sometimes the Bible calls it the devil).

**I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind:** Paul sees that within his own body there is a corrupted and infected nature imbedded in his members that not only opposes the good that he desires in his mind, but also imprisons him to the law of sin that is imprinted into his members because it is impossible for anyone to keep the entire law perfectly. This is the reason we all die, the universal law of sin states, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) and because we all sin and this law has been imbedded into the life of our bodies all of humanity is doomed and destined for death.

**NOTE:** this entity, power or force that works within our corrupted fallen human nature limiting any of us from keeping the entire law in every detail is what the Bible calls sin in our members (sometimes this corrupted power, entity or force is personified as the devil).

For further information on the devil see:

- Devil in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## ROMANS 7:24-25

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**Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**

- **Romans 7:24-25:** Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?  
<sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

It is interesting to notice that five of the Ten Commandments regarding mankind are about outward behaviour:

1. Honour your father and your mother.
2. You shall not murder.
3. You shall not commit adultery.
4. You shall not steal.
5. You shall not bear false witness.

Whereas the last one "You shall not covet," refers to inward thoughts and inward attitudes (Exod. 20:12-17).

**Wretched man that I am!** Paul realises his hopelessness as he stands before the law since the power of sin that is imbedded in his fallen corrupted human body sentences him to death by the law:

- You shall not covet.

This law shines a mega spotlight on the inward sinful dysfunctions and aberrations infecting our thoughts and our attitudes. Nevertheless, Paul accepts this reality and concludes that he will serve the Lord with his mind (his authentic and true self) (the Spirit) while his inherited inward sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that infect his thoughts and attitudes continue to serve the law of sin and condemn him to death.

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## FOOTNOTE

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Paul answers the question:

- Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:25).

In the next chapter.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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