

Romans Chapter 7
New American Standard Bible®

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Romans Chapter 7

Believers United to Christ

¹Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? ²For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ³So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man. ⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." ⁸But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

In his New Study Bible commentary, William Barclay quotes CH Dodd, writing, "When we study (verses 1-6) we should try to forget what Paul says and find out what he means."

Does the Law help us, as believers, to handle the problem of sin in our lives?

Yes, - up to a point

The Law identifies sin – gives us knowledge of what sins we commit. However there is nothing in the law to help us avoid sin. However, the Law offers no advice or help in determining what to do when we need to avoid the things that we do that the Law defines as sin. Knowing what is sin, but not getting any help in how to avoid it places a heavy burden on those who base everything on compliance with the Law. Paul has already used words indicating enslavement, death, unhappiness and shame associated with sin and how it impacts our life. All of those things are the burden of reliance (strictly – alone) on following the Law to assure righteousness. The fact is, relying on compliance with the Law – alone – leads to failure. That is the struggle Christians face today – The Law condemns

us. We can read the Law. We understand the need to comply with the Law, but we have no understanding of how to assure success in keeping the Law.

Following the Law and having forgiveness (second chance) can lead to success.

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Taken alone, Verses 1-3 are only confusing:

What does Paul mean?

Why has he chosen to use this line of thought?

These verses offer an example of common law for those who understand the common law.

¹Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law),

Paul's example concerns marriage and a woman's obligation to her husband, under "the law" (a societal standard of conduct or behavior we are expected to live up to – what is fair – universal understanding of what we should do – in opposition to "the Law", which is the Ten Commandments – God's Holy Law).

There is a clue here. Paul is talking in verses 1-3 about "man's law" (lower case law) and not God's Law (upper case Law).

The legal principle "of man's law" is that death, cancels all contracts.

Now, Paul is going to use God's Law, in relation to man's law.

Here is the key.

There are three things here Wife, Husband, Law.

Wife = us

Husband = Adam, who only brought us sin

Law = God's Commandments, where we will fail

Adam died and we are free to take on Christ as our new husband. We can't have two husbands. We can't have Adam (sin) our original husband and any other. Adam had to die before we could take on another – else we would be guilty under the Law – what Paul equates to adultery.

So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress;

Moving on to Verse 4

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

Looking at this marriage example as a covenant. We were bound to the old covenant (the Law) and our tie to Adam, until it was cancelled by death (Christ on the cross). At that point, we are free to take on a new marriage (to the risen savior). Under our old marriage, we served the Law. In our new marriage, we serve the Spirit (Christ). Like the bride, we are his. Like marriage, we serve him in love.

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

This is the declaration of Paul and the truth of what Christ did and continues to do. We died (to Adam) through the body of Christ (Body = Death).

Christ took on a body for one reason only – so that he might die on the cross to null the contract we had with Adam. One thing happened on the cross – Christ became sin for us. All of his life pointed toward the cross. It was the reason he came – to separate us from Adam (sin). As difficult as it is to understand – on the cross – Jesus became the first husband - Adam (sin – he became sin for us) and when he died, Adam died and we were freed from that union with Adam (sin) to unite with a new husband (Christ the risen).

Our first husband became “Christ, the crucified”, so that we could marry “Christ the risen”.

This happened (in order that) to allow us to unite with the victorious Christ (Risen from the dead) for one reason:

in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Continuing

⁵For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

In our marriage to Adam, we may have sought to serve another, but the Law condemned us at every turn. Living any other way was not possible. Before Christ, we were bound to (married to) Adam and sin under God’s Law and doomed to failure. After the death of Adam, we are free to take on another husband (Christ); freed by death’s nullification of that previous contract (covenant), so that we can be joined to another (Christ).

The fruit we yielded under the Law was death (to sin). The fruit we yield under our new marriage is service. In this new marriage Paul writes:

“so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”

In this new marriage, we are free to do right. That doesn’t always happen, but when we fail, the Law does not condemn us.

We live lives, not under legalism (the Law), but under grace (newness of the Spirit).

Continuing:

⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be!

Christ has given us freedom from sin. If this is true and we are free from the Law, Is the Law sin?

Once again, Paul writes, "May it never be!"

The Law served a purpose. It was given to Moses (in the proper time) to provide God's people and understanding of his Holy Law. It was provided to convict them of what God expects. Some Christians say, "I'm a Christian, saved by grace and the Law has no meaning to me at all. The Law was given to Moses for the Israelites but it doesn't apply to Christians so we can do away with it"

Paul never writes this and Jesus never said it. IN fact, during the sermon on the mound Jesus said that if anyone disparages the Law, changes it, or waters it down in any degree whatsoever, he is under the curse of God.

The Law abides forever.

Paul writes:

On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." ⁸But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

We need the Law to show us what God expects of us. Having the Law, there is no lack of knowledge on our part. Even though the Law cannot deliver us from sin, it serves (very well) as a way of exposing sin to us and driving us back to Christ. In these verses, Paul writes in the past tense – referring to a time before he came to know Christ.

Paul was a good Jew ("A Pharisee of Pharisees"), raised in a good Jewish home, and yet he writes that he lived "apart from the Law." And that through understanding of the Law, sin became alive and it "proved to result in death" for him – through the Law, he died. Sin deceived him and through the Law, sin killed him.

What Paul writes here is likely true for many of us. The Law convicted us. It pushed us toward Christ as we understood that through the Law we were nothing more than sinners and worthy of death.

So, is our Death in sin the Law's fault?

¹²So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

Paul assures us that this is not the case. The Law is Holy. The commandments of God are holy. They are righteous and they are good.

So did the Law cause Paul to die? "May it never be!" It was sin that killed Paul - "Utterly".