



# A Study of Romans

## Month 7: Romans Chapter 7

### The Law of Moses and the Law of Sin



### Overview

If Romans is the most difficult of Paul's letters, Chapter 7 of Romans is considered one of the most challenging sections of the letter to interpret. This is one reason for the old adage that some find Paul's theological writing appealing, while others find it appalling.

A marriage and adultery analogy is used to explain how we are bound by law until death releases from an old relationship and allows for the entry into an entirely new relationship.

Paul explains the problem of how the desires of sin fight against the demands of the law, and how this fight creates a dilemma in the lives of God's people.

Romans 7 is in part an autobiography of Paul. The first person singular pronoun "I" is used almost 30 times in 25 verses to emphasize the struggle against sin in light of his own experience.

## 1. Release from the Law (7: 1-6)

- 1 ***Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?***
- 2 ***For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.***
- 3 ***So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.***
- 4 ***So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.***
- 5 ***For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.***
- 6 ***But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.***

### Key Points:

- The analogy of matrimony and adultery is used to explain that death terminates the binding force of the law over our lives.
- Paul does not state that the Law of Moses dies, but that the believer dies and is released from the law by which they were bound.
- The binding force of the Law awakened man's sinful and selfish impulses which bore the "fruit for death", but through the body of Christ, we might "bear fruit for God".

### Questions:

1. How does the analogy of a widow no longer being bound to her deceased husband relate to man's release from the law?
2. What do you think is meant by the statement "*the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us*"?
3. What is the difference between serving in "the new way of the Spirit" versus serving "in the old way of the written code"?

## **2. Defense of the Law (7: 7-13)**

- 7 ***What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."***
- 8 ***But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.***
- 9 ***Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.***
- 10 ***I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.***
- 11 ***For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.***
- 12 ***So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.***
- 13 ***Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.***

### Key Points:

- Paul makes statements based upon his own personal experiences but they are meant to apply to all mankind.
- The law is holy, righteous, and good in that it shows us our sin.
- Sin within us is aroused by the law and leads to self-destruction and death.

### Questions:

1. How is it that the law is able to show us our sins?
2. What is the meaning of the statement "*For apart from the law, sin was dead*"?
3. What does Paul mean when he says the Law "by no means" became death to him?

## **3. Indictment of Sin (7: 14-25)**

- 14 ***We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.***
- 15 ***I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.***
- 16 ***And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.***

- 17 ***As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.***
- 18 ***For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.***
- 19 ***For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.***
- 20 ***Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.***
- 21 ***So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.***
- 22 ***For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;***
- 23 ***but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.***
- 24 ***What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?***
- 25 ***Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.***

Key Points:

- Paul claims the law is spiritual, which supports earlier verses that say the law is holy, righteous, and good.
- Paul admits that at times he does not understand his own actions.
- Paul expresses gratitude to God through Jesus Christ that he is a slave in his mind to God’s law, even though he is also a slave to the law of sin.

Questions:

1. How is the law spiritual?
2. What is meant by Paul saying “*it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me*”?
3. What does Paul mean when he says he is unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin?

----- **END OF LESSON** -----

NEXT MONTH – read Romans 8: 1- 39 (The Law of the Spirit and the Love of God)

Covering: The Flesh and the Spirit; Children of God by Adoption; Revelation and Redemption of the Children of God; More than Conquerors in Christ