Romans 7: Dead to the Law, Alive to Christ

Participant's Study Guide

Part 1: Romans 7:1–6 • Part 2: Romans 7:7–25 • King James Version

Welcome

Welcome to Mount Up Wednesday Bible Study! Over two sessions we will walk through Romans 7, one of the most honest and searching chapters in all of Paul's letters. In Part 1 (Romans 7:1–6) we will see that believers have died to the law through Christ so that they may belong to him and bring forth fruit unto God. In Part 2 (Romans 7:7–25) we will see that the law is holy, just, and good, that sin is the real problem, and that deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This guide is yours to write in. Each part includes a short context, key themes, illustrations, discussion questions with space for your answers, cross-references, a memory verse, a weekly challenge, and room for notes. All Scripture is quoted from the King James Version.

Key Sentence: ***The law reveals sin; sin exploits the commandment; Christ brings us into new life.***

The Big Picture: Romans 1–7

Romans tells one great story: humanity is under the power of sin, but God has acted through Jesus Christ to make people right with himself and bring them into a new life. Romans 7 answers a question raised in chapter 6. If believers are "not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14), what is their relationship to God's law, and does that mean the law itself was bad? Paul's answer is that believers died to the law through Christ and now belong to the risen Christ. The law is not the problem; sin is.

How the Argument Builds

Passage	Question Paul Answers	Paul's Answer

Romans 1–3:20	What is humanity's problem?	All are under sin; the law reveals sin
Romans 3:21–4:25	How are people made right?	By grace through faith, not works of law
Romans 5	What has Christ accomplished?	Peace with God; life in Christ, not Adam's legacy
Romans 6	Does grace permit continued sin?	No; united with Christ, we live for God
Romans 7	What about the law and the struggle with sin?	We belong to Christ; the law is good, sin is deadly
Romans 8	What does life in Christ look like?	No condemnation; life in the Spirit

Notice the movement: chapter 6 describes a changed relationship to sin, and Romans 7:1–6 describes a changed relationship to the law. Romans 7:7–25 then defends the goodness of the law while exposing the deadly power of sin.

The Bridge to Romans 8

Romans 7 ends with a cry and a thanksgiving: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul answers that cry in the very next sentence: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Keep this bridge in mind; Romans 7 is not the end of the story.

How to Read Scripture as a Letter

- Read the whole chapter aloud in one sitting, the way the believers in Rome first heard it.
- Notice the punctuation and the connecting words: for, wherefore, what shall we say then, but, so then.
- Identify who is speaking and to whom.
- Ask: What is the argument, and where is it going?
- Only afterward, look at the verse divisions in your Bible.

Romans 7: The Letter Text

Verse numbers were added to the Bible many centuries after Paul wrote. Below, Romans 7 appears without them so you can follow Paul's flow of thought as one continuous message.

ROMANS 7

ROMANS 7 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? 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. 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.

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. 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. 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.

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. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

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. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 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. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 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. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 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.

Part 1: Released to Belong to Christ (Romans 7:1–6)

Context

Paul wrote Romans around AD 57 from Corinth to believers in Rome, a church of both Jewish and Gentile believers. He speaks here "to them that know the law." Using an everyday example from marriage law, he shows how death changes a legal relationship. Believers have become dead to the law by the body of Christ so that they may belong to another, the risen Christ, and bring forth fruit unto God.

Key Themes

- The law has dominion over a person as long as he lives.
- Death ends a binding relationship.
- Believers are dead to the law by the body of Christ.
- We now belong to the risen Christ, not merely released from something.
- We serve in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter.

Illustration: Death Changes the Bond



Death Changes the Bond — Romans 7:1–4

While her husband lived, this woman was bound to him in marriage. His death ended that bond, leaving her free to marry another. Notice carefully: Paul does not say the law died. He says believers "are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." We now belong to the risen Christ.

Illustration: Bringing Forth Fruit unto God



Bringing Forth Fruit unto God — Romans 7:4–6

A branch bears fruit because it is joined to the vine. Joined to Christ, we "bring forth fruit unto God," serving "in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

Discussion Questions

Observation

1. According to Romans 7:1–3, how long does the law have dominion over a person? What changes the woman's situation?

2. According to Romans 6:4 and 7:4, what is the purpose of the believer's new relationship with Christ?

Interpretation

3. How does Romans 7:1–6 help explain Romans 6:14, "ye are not under the law, but under grace"?

4. Why is it important that Paul describes us not merely as released from something but as belonging to someone, the risen Christ?

Application

5. How might someone confuse belonging to Christ with simply trying harder to follow religious rules?

6. What would serving "in newness of spirit" look like in your home, work, or church this week?

Cross-References

Reference	Connection
Romans 6:4, 14	Raised to walk in newness of life; not under the law, but under grace
Galatians 2:19–20	Dead to the law, that I might live unto God
John 15:4–5	Abide in me; the branch bears fruit in the vine
2 Corinthians 3:6	The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life

Colossians 2:14	The handwriting of ordinances nailed to his cross

Memory Verse

> *"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."*
>
> **— Romans 7:4 (KJV)**

Weekly Challenge

Each morning this week, before you begin your day, pray: "Lord, I belong to the risen Christ. Help me bring forth fruit unto God today." At the end of the week, write down one way you served God out of love and belonging rather than out of mere duty.

My Notes

Part 2: The Law Is Good; Sin Is the Problem (Romans 7:7–25)

Context

Having said that believers are dead to the law, Paul anticipates an objection: "Is the law sin? God forbid." The law reveals sin, as a mirror shows dirt. But sin, "taking occasion by the commandment," used something good to deceive and kill. Paul then describes an intense struggle: "the good that I would I do not." Christians differ on whether this describes Paul before conversion, the believer's ongoing struggle, or humanity's predicament under the law. Every view points to the seriousness of sin and our need for deliverance in Christ.

Key Themes

- The law reveals sin: "I had not known sin, but by the law."
- Sin seized occasion by the commandment and produced death.

- The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.
- Sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful.
- Deliverance comes not by our strength but through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Illustration: The Mirror Shows, but Does Not Wash



The Law Reveals Sin — Romans 7:7

A mirror shows the dirt on our face, but it cannot wash it away. In the same way, the law shows us our sin ("Thou shalt not covet"), yet the law itself cannot cleanse or deliver us.

Illustration: The Light on a Dangerous Path



The Commandment Exposes the Danger — Romans 7:8–13

A lantern is good: it exposes the broken edge of the path. The commandment is holy, just, and good, and it exposes danger. But sin seized occasion by the commandment, using a good thing to deceive and kill, so that sin "might become exceeding sinful."

Discussion Questions

Observation

1. In Romans 3:20 and 7:7, what does Paul say the law makes known?

2. How does Paul describe the law in Romans 7:12 and 7:14? List the words he uses.

Interpretation

3. Why does Paul insist in Romans 7:7–13 that the law is good, even though sin used the commandment to produce death?

4. In Romans 7:24–25, where does Paul look for deliverance? Why is it significant that he does not look to himself or to the law?

Application

5. When God's Word exposes sin in your life, how can you respond with honesty and with confidence in Christ?

6. Where do you feel the struggle of "the good that I would I do not"? How does Romans 8:1 speak to that struggle?

Cross-References

Reference	Connection
Romans 3:20	By the law is the knowledge of sin
James 1:23–25	The Word as a mirror
Psalm 119:105	Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
Galatians 5:16–17	The flesh lusteth against the Spirit
Romans 8:1–2	No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus

Memory Verse

> *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
>
> **— Romans 7:24–25a (KJV)**

Weekly Challenge

This week, read Romans 7:7–25 and Romans 8:1–4 together in one sitting. When you notice a sin God's Word exposes, don't hide it or excuse it. Confess it honestly to God, then thank him aloud: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Come ready to share (as you are comfortable) what you learned.

My Notes