

1. **Introduction:** Today we will begin Romans chapter 7. In chapter 6 Paul commented on sin, Law, and grace.
  - In 6:14 Paul says, “*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*” What does he mean?
  - Believers have, in God’s grace, been declared righteous (justified) apart from the Law, therefore they are not under the Law in the sense they must obey the Law hoping to obtain righteousness.
  - Nor is the Law a system through which individual believers can obtain access to God. That is clear from OT restrictions on approaching the Holy of Holies
  - In Romans chapter 7 Paul follows up his “*not under law but under grace*” statement by answering the question “Does God’s Law apply to believers, and if so, how?”
  - Under the Law, righteousness could only be achieved through perfect obedience to every detail of the Law all the time.
  - No one ever did or could perfectly obey the Law. Therefore the Law cannot be a way to salvation (3:20). What the Law does do is to reveal sin (3:20), condemn sinners (3:19), identify sin as transgressing the Law (4:15), brings wrath (4:15), and came into being to increase awareness of trespass (5:20).
  - The Gospel proclaims a righteousness apart from the Law. God is not inconsistent and He is a Law-keeper as well as the Law-giver. He does not violate His Law. How can there be righteousness apart from the Law?
  - Apart from the Law, justification is by faith in Christ.
  - Apart from the Law, sanctification is through the gracious transforming work of the Holy Spirit.
  - “*Righteousness apart from the Law*” refers to righteousness acquired without perfect obedience to the Law. Again, how is that possible?
  - God made “*righteousness apart from the Law*” possible through the incarnate God-Man, Jesus. Who was appointed the federal representative and kinsman- redeemer (or substitute) for all who would believe in Him.

- As the approved substitute for all who would believe in Him, Jesus earned righteousness by perfectly obeying the Law. That earned righteousness would be credited to those who believe, those for whom He was the substitute.
- Crediting Jesus' earned righteousness to those who believe in Him was "apart from the Law" in the sense recipients were not required to perfectly obey the Law personally.
- Believers receive righteousness earned by Jesus as God's free gift of grace.
- Paul begins his answer to the question "when does the Law apply" with an analogy to marriage.
- The analogy is not perfect, but the point is that though "married" to the law, believers were freed from that marriage by their death "in Christ" and are now married to Christ.

2. **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> For 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 in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code."***

- In 7:1 Paul cites the legal principle that the Law is binding on a person only as long as their mortal life continues.
- In 7:2-3 he gives the illustration that a marriage contract is valid only as long as both parties live. If one party dies the marriage contract is void.
- In 7:4 he speaks of God's Law, pointing out, it is binding only on the living.

- In 7:5-6 he draws an important conclusion. Believers are in union with Christ. As all people were physically present in Adam as his future progeny, so all believers were spiritually present in Christ when He died on the cross.
  - A believer's death in Christ on the cross ended their obligations to the Law and made it possible for them to be slaves to righteousness through the Spirit, leaving behind the old way of the written code.
3. **Paul Defends Against the Claim the Law has Become Useless:** The claim is that, since believers are dead to the Law (7:4), and not under Law but under grace (6:4), the Law is of no value and should be ignored.
- It is true the Law can neither deliver justification (being declared righteous) or sanctification (being made holy).
  - What the Law does do is reveal sin (3:20) and condemn the sinner (3:19) thus teaching recognition of sin and its danger.
  - The moral Law gives requirements to live a life that pleases God.
  - Paul's defense has two objectives: (1.) To show the critics are wrong and (2.) to show the proper place of the Law in a believer's life.
  - When Paul says believers died to the Law, he means they died "in Christ" to the requirement for obedience to the Law as the way to obtain justification. He does not mean a believer is not responsible for obeying God's moral Law.
  - Because it is impossible to achieve salvation through obedience to the Law, God graciously provided a way to righteousness apart from the Law.
  - That provision is justification through grace by faith in the salvation work of Christ. The only requirement to be justified is faith in Christ Jesus.
  - Sanctification is guided by the gracious work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Obedience to the moral Law is a necessary part of the sanctification process.
  - God's Law is designed to control the old fallen nature.
  - How then does Law apply in the new situation where believers through regeneration have a new nature, are justified, and are being sanctified through the work of the Holy Spirit?

- When the Law was given to Israel, it consisted of 3 categories – civil, ceremonial, and moral. The first two categories applied to Israel as Israel and are no longer applicable.
  - The moral Law is God’s revelation of His will for how His people should live and is to be obeyed by believers.
  - The moral Law is to be fulfilled by every believer, not because salvation depends on it, but because, being justified, they yearn to please God by obeying His revealed will and cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit.
  - Paul declares the Law to be holy, righteous, and good. But every human has a rebellious sin nature which can be stirred into rebellion when the Law says, “do this” and “don’t do that.”
4. **More on “In What Sense Are Believers Not Under the Law”:** In 6:14 Paul said believers are *“not under the law, but under grace,”* in 7:4 he says believers, *“have died to the law,”* and in 7:6 that believers are *“released from the law.”* Do these comments mean believers are free from obedience to God’s Law? As pointed out earlier, the answer is no! Then, what is meant?
- My comments are stimulated by John Stott’s discussion. Paul used the “not under law” phrase in two different letters with different contexts each based on a contrast between things. .
  - An antithesis between law and grace is presented in Romans 6:14, *“you are not under law, but under grace.”* This antithesis between law and grace indicates Paul is referring to the way believers receive justification.
  - Justification is based on Jesus’ salvation work and is given by God’s grace alone. Believers do nothing nor can do anything to earn justification.
  - A different antithesis appears in Galatians 5:18, *“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”* Here the antithesis is between law and Spirit indicating Paul is referring to the process of sanctification.
  - These comments by Paul seem to be clarifications of the interaction between God’s Law, justification, and sanctification within God’s provision for salvation through Jesus Christ.

- God’s Law is designed to control the old fallen nature. Paul writes of how the Law applies to the new situation where believers, through regeneration, have a new godly sub-nature, have been justified, and are being sanctified. A believer’s attitude toward the Law can take at least three forms.

5. **Three Possible Attitudes Toward the Law:** Paul speaks of three possible attitudes toward the Law. The first two he rejects, the third he commends. John Stott identifies them “legalism,” “antinomianism,” and “law-fulfilling freedom.”

- **Legalism:** Legalists believe their relationship with God depends on their obedience to the Law and they seek to be both justified and sanctified through obedience to the Law. Their problem is the Law’s inability to save them.
- **Antinomianism:** Antinomians go to the opposite extreme and, blaming their problems of the Law, they completely reject it. They claim to be free from all
- **Law-Fulfilling Freedom:** Law-fulfilling free people preserve the balance. This is the appropriate way for believers to live under the Law. They rejoice in freedom from requirements of the Law for justification and sanctification. They rejoice in the freedom to fulfill God’s moral Law and strive to obey that Law which is God’s design for living in a manner consistent with His character that pleases Him.

6. **Role of Human Nature in Determining Attitude Toward the Law:** A believer’s human nature is the instrument which determines their attitude toward the Law. Because they have received a new nature but have not lost their sin nature, a believer’s human nature is composed of two opposing sub-natures.

- When believers are regenerated, they receive a new godly sub-nature, but the sinful sub-nature remains and is in conflict with their godly sub-nature.
- A believer’s two sub-natures interact to form one regenerated human nature. One sub-nature is inclined toward God, the other toward sin.
- The new godly nature was received from God through regeneration, the sinful sub-nature is a remnant of their sinful fallen nature. What is the difference between a believer’s two sub-natures and Jesus’ two natures?
- Jesus two natures are distinct and do not interact. He has a divine nature and a human nature.

- Jesus' human nature, like Adam's original nature, is holy and sinless.
- Every believer's life, including Paul's, is tainted by a "sin nature." Paul declared himself to be the worst of sinners ( <sup>NIV</sup> 1Timothy 1:15 ).
- Ultimately, God will totally eliminate a believers' "inclined-toward sin" sub-nature, but not until glorification.
- Meanwhile, thoughts, words, and deeds are those of the one person having two sub-natures. Each sub-nature provides inputs to decision-making.
- The two natures oppose one another, yet, in every situation one sub-nature will win and control the resulting thoughts, words, and deeds.
- When sin occurs, it is not merely the "old sinful sub-nature" that sins, the believer sins (1John 1:10).

7. **Romans 7:6-13**: *"But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.<sup>7</sup> 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. For 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. For 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."*

- Verse 7:6 is repeated to provide context for the question introduced in 7:7.
- Verse 7:7 introduces a new question. Does the necessity to be "*released from the law*" imply the Law is bad or is sin? Paul says, "*By no means.*"
- Paul vindicates the Law. He shows the Law is not responsible for sin or death.

- Concerning the character of the Law, Paul says the Law itself is holy but it is incapable of making anyone holy.
- It is right to look to the Law for moral guidance, but wrong to expect to be justified or sanctified through obeying it.
- Justification and sanctification are both “apart from the Law.”
- Justification is by faith in Christ.
- Sanctification is through the transforming work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- The Law is Holy and good and necessary to reveal sin and direct believers in right behavior. It is God’s revealed will for how His people should live.
- The Law does more than simply reveal sin, it can provoke sin.
- How can forbidding sin provoke sin? Perversity is one answer. Perversity means doing something for no other reason than because it is forbidden.
- Perversity is joy in doing wrongdoing for its own sake.
- Perversity seems to be an instinct built into the “inclined-to-sin” sub-nature.
- As is often rightly said, human nature often thinks and does the opposite of that which is commanded. We see that characteristic in children and adults.

8. **Insight into the Nature of Sin**: Understanding “perversity” is important in understanding the nature of sin.

- Augustine speaks to this issue in his **Confessions, Book II, chapter 6**.
- When sinning, there is always a superficial motive such as greed or anger.
- But there is also an underlying heart motive that enjoys what is forbidden for no reason other than it is forbidden, a desire to oppose God without penalty.
- Augustine illustrates with a self-example of stealing pears when he had no need. He already had an abundance and simply threw away those he stole.
- Everyone would like to be more like God, especially in having the power to do what they please. God’s Law limits us reminding us we are not sovereign nor can we live as we please under God.
- The first temptation recorded in Scripture was from the serpent. He said to Eve, “you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). Willingness to try to satisfy that desire was the essence of the first temptation. When motivations are closely examined, the essence of all our temptations is similar to the first.

9. **Different Meanings of Words for Death:** Words for death in this passage are used to signify different things.
- In verse 6 *“having died”* is connected to verse 4 *“died to the Law through the body of Christ”* and refers to believers’ spiritual death in Christ terminating the Law’s demands on believers.
  - *“For apart from the Law, sin lies dead”* in verse 8 refers to the fact that a believer’s sin nature can be either active or inactive.
  - Desire can stimulate and make an inactive sin nature become active.
10. **What Does Paul Mean Saying He was Alive Apart from the Law?** In 7:9 Paul says, *“I was once alive apart from the law.”*
- What does Paul mean? In his unconverted life as a Jewish boy and later as a Pharisee, there would have been no time when he was not under Law.
  - It is impossible, as a Jewish boy from a devout family, for him to have been “apart from the Law” in the sense that he neither knew or tried to obey.
  - So it seems “apart from the Law” must mean he had never realized the true essential demands of the Law until he was struck by the fact that coveting is internal not an external.
  - Being “alive” seems to refer to self-perception that he was spiritually alive being pleasing to God.
  - His realization of the internal obedience the Law truly required caused him to know that, though he externally was obedient to the Law, he had been spiritually dead to essence of the Law and was not pleasing God at all.
  - He was devastated, but the experience put him firmly on God’s right path.
11. **External Obedience:** Pharisees, like Paul was before conversion, approached obeying the Law by defining what they thought to be an exhaustive list of external do’s and don’ts.
- Paul declared that, when he was a Pharisee, he was blameless before the Law.
  - The 10<sup>th</sup> commandment deals with the invisible inner person. That presents a difficulty to the external obedience approach.



- On the surface, external observance of the first 9 commandments seems to be possible, but the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is altogether different.
- Obedience to the command “*do not covet*” depends on thoughts, imagination, words, and emotions. When that inner focus of the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is realized, the external obedience approach falls apart.
- In verses 9-11 the phrases “*sin came alive and I died,*” “*proved death to me,*” and “*through it killed me*” seem to mean Paul was stunned when he finally realized that covetousness was an internal sin humanly impossible to control.
- Covetousness as an internal sin was overlooked in Paul’s earlier life.
- Now he realized thoughts and imagination over which he had little if any control could cause him to disobey the Law.
- Furthermore, when he broke the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment and coveted, he would inevitably break at least one of the other 9. Thank God for righteousness apart from the Law!
- His realization of the implications of covetousness provoked “*all kinds of covetousness.*” That is “perverse” as mentioned before. For a time he died to righteousness (righteous thoughts were blocked by covetous thoughts).
- Finally, in verses 12-13 a hurting Paul appears to ask is it possible that the Law, which is good, is the source of sin and death. His answer is NO!
- Indwelling inclination to sin is the problem, not the Law.

12. **What is Next:** Romans 7:14-25.