SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Romans

Chapter Seven, Verses 1–25

The Law, the Flesh, and the Deliverer — Dead to the Law, Married to Christ, and the War Within

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

A marriage ended by a death, a commandment that sin turned into a weapon, and a man who does what he hates — until he stops asking "what" and asks "Who will set me free?" Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 7:1–25

married · exposed · divided · delivered

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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A death that frees, a Law that exposes, a war inside, and a Deliverer

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"But 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." — Romans 7:6

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Romans 7:1–25

The Law, the Flesh, and the Deliverer — Released from the Law to belong to Another — the Law's good work, sin's bad use of it, and the cry that ends in thanks

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Romans 7 in 4 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 7:24–25a

"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

† Before the Passage

Romans 6 ended with a sentence that raised two hard questions: "sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (6:14). If grace frees us from the Law, is the Law the enemy? And if we are no longer under it, how were we ever let out? Chapter 7 answers both. Verses 1–6 explain the release — not that the Law died, but that we died to it in Christ and now belong to Another. Verses 7–25 defend the Law against the charge that it is sin, and show why it could never do what only God's Son and Spirit can do. Chapter 8 then opens with the verdict: "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1).

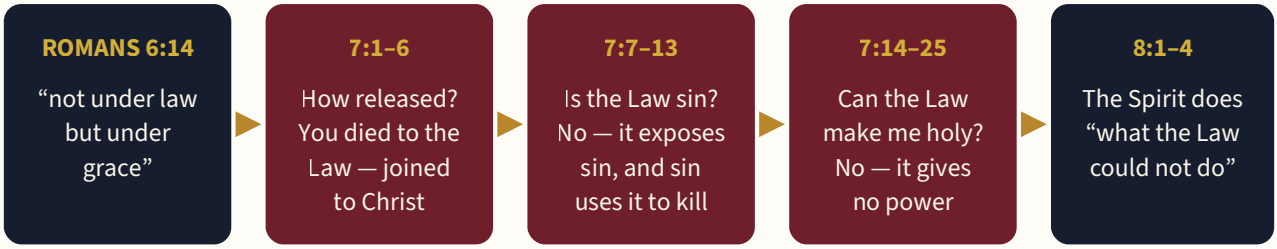
Paul writes "to those who know the law" (7:1) — Jewish believers in Rome and the Gentile God-fearers who had learned Moses in the synagogue. He is not speaking to people who despise the Law but to people who love it, and he is careful never to say a word against it: it is "holy and righteous and good" (7:12) and

"spiritual" (7:14). The problem in this chapter is never the commandment. It is what sin does with the commandment, and what the flesh cannot do with it.

The Old Testament is underneath every line. The commandment Paul names is the tenth, "You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21) — the one commandment that cannot be kept by outward behavior alone. The verb for what sin did, "deceived me" (7:11), is the word Paul uses for the serpent and Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14): a commandment given for life, a deceiver, and death. And the man who "joyfully concurs with the law of God" (7:22) sounds like the man of Psalm 1, whose "delight is in the law of the LORD."

Read the chapter as three movements of one argument. First a picture (vv. 1–6): a wife bound to her husband until death, and a new marriage that bears fruit for God. Then a defense (vv. 7–13): the Law exposes sin, and sin uses the Law to kill. Then a confession (vv. 14–25), in the present tense, with "I" on nearly every line: the willing is present, the doing is not. Who that "I" is has divided good teachers for sixteen centuries, and our four voices do not all frame it the same way; this study sets out the readings fairly and lets each teacher speak for himself.

FIGURE · WHERE ROMANS 7 SITS IN THE ARGUMENT



Two questions (7:7, 7:13), one answer both times: "May it never be!"

Read left to right: chapter 7 explains the release promised in 6:14 and clears the way for 8:1–4 — the Law is defended at every step, and sin and the flesh are blamed.

I
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 7:1–6

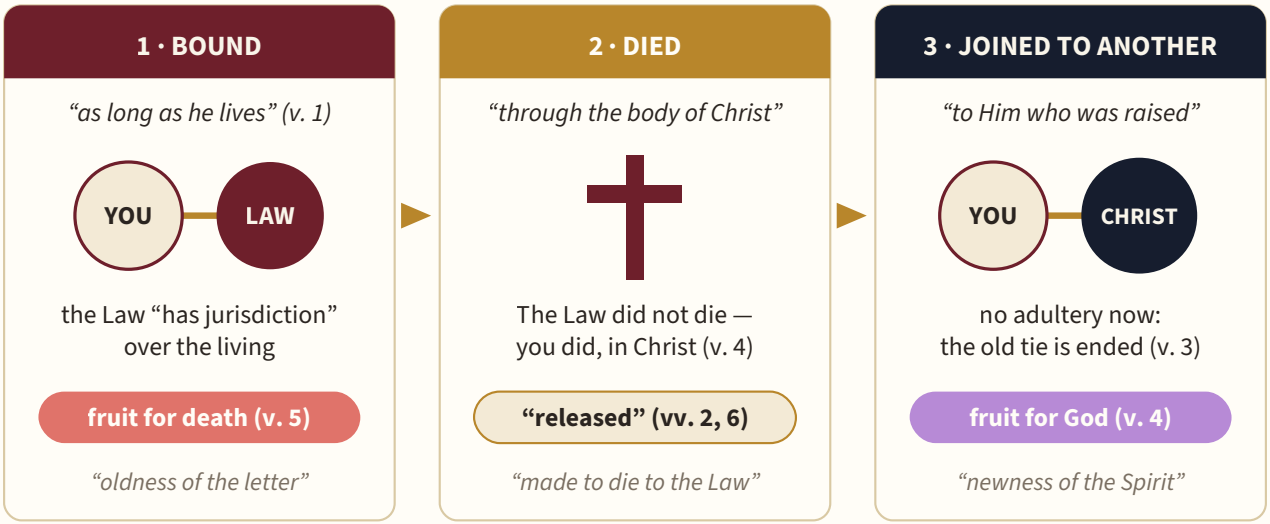
Dead to the Law, Joined to Another

A marriage ended by a death — and a new marriage that bears fruit for God

[1] Or 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? [2] For 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. [3] So 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. [4] Therefore, 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. [5] For 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.* 6 *But 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.*
>
> ROMANS 7:1–6

FIGURE · THE MARRIAGE ILLUSTRATION (7:1–6)



Follow the three panels: the Law does not die — you die with Christ, and so are free to be joined to the risen Lord and bear a different fruit.

κυριεύει … ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ

KYRIEUEI · ETHANATŌTHĒTE · "HAS JURISDICTION … MADE TO DIE" · G2961, G2289

Kyrieuō (G2961) is to rule as lord — the same verb as 6:9 ("death no longer is master over Him") and 6:14 ("sin shall not be master over you"). The Law is a lord with real authority, but only "as long as he lives." Then verse 4 turns the picture: *ethanatōthēte*, from *thanatoō* (G2289), "to put to death," is passive — you **were put to death**, and the instrument is named: "through the body of Christ." Paul does not say the Law died. The believer died, in the death of the One he is united to (6:3–6). The released wife of verse 2 is *katērgētai*, from *katargeō* (G2673), "made inoperative" — the same verb in verse 6, "released from the Law." The Law still stands; its claim on the one who died is switched off.

καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ … ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος

KARPOPHORĒSŌMEN · KAINOTĒTI · "BEAR FRUIT … NEWNESS" · G2592, G2538

The purpose of the new marriage is fruit: *karpophoreō* (G2592), to bear fruit, the word of the parable of the soils (Mark 4:20) and of the Colossians' gospel "constantly bearing fruit" (Colossians 1:6). The same verb in verse 5 has the opposite harvest: "to bear fruit for death." Every marriage is fruitful; the question is to whom. Verse 6 then names the new way of serving: *en kainotēti pneumatos*, "in newness of the Spirit." *Kainotēs* (G2538) occurs only twice in the New Testament — "newness of life" (6:4) and here — and it means a new kind of thing, not merely a recent one. Set against it is *palaiotēti grammatos*, the "oldness of the letter": the written code that commanded from outside but could not change the heart (2 Corinthians 3:6).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik starts with the simple principle Paul says everyone knows: law has authority only over the living, and death ends every obligation. He notes that the Greek has no "the" before law in verse 1, so Paul is stating a general rule before applying it to Moses. Believers are dead to the law as a principle of justification *or* of sanctification — not a way to be saved and not a way to grow. He quotes Leon Morris: "Believers are through with the law. It is not for them an option as a way of salvation." But the freedom has a point. "We are free so we can be 'married' to Jesus and so that we can bear fruit to God," and verse 6 tells how — serving in the newness of the Spirit, not grudgingly under the letter.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "Freed from the Law" Sproul makes the marriage turn on one detail: "Paul does not say that the law has died, but you are the one who has died." The Law in view, he argues, is the whole moral law, reaching back before Sinai to Adam's probation (he cites Romans 5) — the covenant of works that Christ, the new Adam, kept perfectly. "You died in Christ, and in Christ, the law was fulfilled." Under the Law, "the only fruit that we set forth or brought forth was the fruit of death." Then the guardrail: "our being freed from the law's dominion does not give us a license to sin." The Law still serves God's people — revealing His character and our sin ("As Calvin said, the law reveals to us our corruption"), restraining evil, and showing what pleases Him.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his exposition of the chapter Spurgeon calls verses 1–3 an illustration with one hinge: "There is no deliverance from its power but by death." Through the death of Christ "we are dead to the law," and a new house has a new rule: "Jesus is our husband, grace is the ruling principle of his house, and holiness is the fruit of the marriage." On verse 5 he sets the two principles side by side — law provokes the old nature to rebel, grace moves the new nature to obey. On verse 6 he says believers no longer live under "do this and live"; their obedience comes from love, not fear, and they do not pursue holiness to earn salvation. "We have another spirit altogether within us."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry reads the first husband plainly: "Our first marriage was to the law, which, according to the law of marriage, was to continue only during the life of the law." The law of marriage binds "till the death of one of the parties," and believers are dead to the law "by our union with the mystical body of Christ," then married to another, "even to him who is raised from the dead," to bring forth fruit unto God. Of our life "in the flesh" he gives two pictures: the law was like an imperfect dam that only made the stream of sin swell higher, and like the sun on a dunghill, drawing up its vapors — it commanded and threatened, but gave no grace to heal. The new service is "in newness of spirit."

II
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 7:7–13

Is the Law Sin? May It Never Be!

The commandment exposes sin — and sin turns the commandment into a weapon

7 *What 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." 8 *But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of*
every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. 9 *I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the*
commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10 *and this commandment, which was to result in life,*
proved to result in death for me; 11 *for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and*
through it killed me. 12 *So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*
13 *Therefore 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.

ROMANS 7:7–13

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

EXODUS 20:17

FIGURE · WHAT THE LAW IS — AND WHAT IT CANNOT DO

WHAT THE LAW IS	WHAT SIN DOES WITH IT	WHAT IT CANNOT DO
◆ **holy** — v. 12	**EXPOSED** by it — v. 7 *"I would not have come to know sin"*	**cannot supply the doing** *"the doing of the good is not" — v. 18*
◆ **righteous** — v. 12	**AROUSED** by it — vv. 5, 8 *"coveting of every kind"*	**cannot change the flesh** *"I am of flesh" — v. 14;* *"with my flesh" — v. 25*
◆ **good** — vv. 12, 13, 16	**USES** it as a base — vv. 8, 11 *"taking opportunity"*	**cannot set me free** *"Who will set me free …?" — v. 24*
◆ **spiritual** — v. 14	**KILLS** through it — vv. 9–11 *"deceived me … killed me"*	
◆ **"to result in life"** — v. 10	**UNMASKED** by it — v. 13 *"utterly sinful"*	

THE ANSWER IS A PERSON, NOT A RULE

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:25) — "For what the Law could not do … God did" (8:3)

Read the columns across: the fault is never in the Law (left); sin turns the good commandment into its weapon (middle); and the Law has no power to free or change (right) — so the answer comes from outside it.

ἀφορμὴν δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ ἁμαρτία

APHORMĒN · "TAKING OPPORTUNITY" · G874

Aphormē (G874) is a starting point from which something is launched; Thayer gives its primary sense as "a base of operations," and the Greek world used it for a forward camp or staging harbor that supplied an army. Paul uses it twice (vv. 8, 11): sin, like an invading force, seizes the commandment as a beachhead. What it produced was *pasan epithymian*, "coveting of every kind" — *epithymia* (G1939), desire that reaches for what is forbidden, the noun of the tenth commandment's verb *epithymeō* (G1937). Sin is the active subject in every clause: it takes, it produces, it "became alive" — *anezēsen*, from *anazaō* (G326), "to come back to life," as if it had only been sleeping.

ἐξηπάτησέν με

EXĒPATĒSEN ME · "DECEIVED ME" · G1818

Exapataō (G1818) is "to deceive thoroughly," an intensified form of *apataō*. Paul uses it for the serpent: "as the serpent deceived Eve" (2 Corinthians 11:3; cf. 1 Timothy 2:14, "the woman being deceived"). Verse 11 replays Eden in one man's life: a good commandment given "to result in life" (v. 10), a deceiver who uses it, and death. Verse 12 then clears the Law completely: *hagia kai dikaia kai agathē*, holy and righteous and good. Verse 13 gives the purpose: that sin might become *kath' hyperbolēn hamartōlos* — *hyperbolē* (G5236), "a throwing beyond," beyond measure, "utterly sinful." The Law does not make sin worse than it is; it shows how bad it already was.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

To "Is the law sin?" Guzik gives Paul's answer, a firm no, and a picture: "The law is like an x-ray machine; it reveals what is there but hidden." But sin also exploits the commandment. He reaches for Augustine's stolen pears and for Prohibition: "Once God draws a boundary for us, we are immediately enticed to cross that boundary." Sin deceives by promising satisfaction, an excuse and an escape from punishment. Paul is not against the law at all — "The problem is in us, not in the law." On verse 13 he quotes Wiersbe, "the Law is a magnet that draws out of us all kinds of sin and corruption," and Spurgeon, "there is nothing in the world so bad as sin."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "Sin's Advantage in the Law" Sproul keeps the blame where Paul puts it: "The law is not sin, but the law makes known to us our sin." It works like a mirror, showing God's holiness and our corruption, and the Spirit uses it to convict. For verse 9 he borrows the line attributed to Admiral Yamamoto after Pearl Harbor — "all we have accomplished here was to awaken a sleeping giant" — because "Sin, for the most part, was sleeping until the law came along and awakened that sleeping giant." The Law is holy because it expresses God's character, so obeying it is never legalism. Sin promises pleasure but cannot deliver happiness, and it is "exceedingly sinful" because it turns God's good command into an occasion for rebellion.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 13 as "The Monster Dragged to Light" (No. 1095, 1873). Many people never see sin as sin, he says, but where it is clearly seen no milder name will do: "Sin is sin, and in that word we have said all." Its worst mark is how it perverts the best things. "Sin kills men by that which was ordained to life." "Law to our depraved nature is but the signal for revolt." And the contrast he wants every hearer to feel: "The Lord brings good out of evil, but sin brings evil out of good." He tells how "Thou shalt not covet" found out Paul himself. Seeing this is not morbid; it is the door to mercy: "Unless sin is seen to be sin, grace will never be seen to be grace."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry defends the Law before he explains it: "It is *holy, just, and good*. The law in general is so, and every particular commandment is so." It is spiritual, reaching the heart, and it discovers sin — Paul "had not known lust" but for the tenth commandment. Sin, which Henry glosses as Paul's own corrupt nature, took occasion from the commandment, promising impunity, and so deceived and slew him. Verse 9 he calls humbling: "I was alive" describes Paul confident in his own good opinion of himself while he lacked the Law's spiritual meaning; when the commandment came home, "Sin revived, and I died" — his self-confidence died with it.

III
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 7:14–20

The War Within

A spiritual Law, a man of flesh — the willing is present, the doing is not

14 For we know that △ the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, ⚠ sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but ⚠ I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the ↻ Law, confessing that the ↻ Law is good. 17 So

> *now, no longer am I the one doing it, but ⚠ sin which dwells in me.* [18] *For I know that ⚠ nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.* [19] *For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.* [20] *But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but ⚠ sin which dwells in me.*
>
> ROMANS 7:14–20

FIGURE · WHO IS THE "I" OF 7:14–25?

A · A BELIEVER NOW Paul as a regenerate man	B · AN AWAKENED SINNER unregenerate, under the Law	C · PAUL LOOKING BACK his past life under the Law
THE CASE FROM THE TEXT • Present tense from v. 14 on • "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man" (v. 22) • He hates his sin (v. 15) • v. 25b comes after the thanksgiving	THE CASE FROM THE TEXT • "sold into bondage to sin" (v. 14) • "making me a prisoner of the law of sin" (v. 23) • Contrast 6:18, "freed from sin," and 8:2, "set you free"	THE CASE FROM THE TEXT • vv. 7–13 are past tense: "I was once alive" (v. 9) • The present tense is read as vivid recollection • Compare Phil 3:6 — "found blameless"
OUR TEACHERS SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY — *all three hold A*	OUR TEACHERS Henry weighs it, then prefers A; none of our four holds it	OUR TEACHERS Sproul names it and finds "no justification" for it; none of four holds it

Spurgeon, of all pre-conversion readings: *"evidently mistaken"*

GUZIK · "In a sense this is an irrelevant question" — it is the struggle of anyone who tries to obey God in his own strength; yet "the new man is the real Paul."

The three main readings side by side, with the case each one makes from the text and where our four teachers stand — three hold reading A; Guzik calls the question secondary to the struggle itself.

σάρκινός εἰμι, πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν

SARKINOS · PEPRAMENOS · "OF FLESH … SOLD" · G4560, G4097

Pneumatikos (spiritual) and *sarkinos* (G4560, "made of flesh, fleshly") face each other in one sentence: the Law belongs to the realm of the Spirit; "I" belong, still, to the realm of flesh. *Pepramenos* is the perfect passive of *piprask*ō (G4097), "to sell," used of selling a debtor into slavery (Matthew 18:25) — a past sale with a standing result. That word is the strongest argument for reading the "I" as unregenerate; those who read it of a believer answer that it names what the believer still finds in his flesh, which the rest of the paragraph explains ("that is, in my flesh," v. 18). From verse 14 the verbs switch to the present tense, and stay there.

ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία

HĒ OIKOUSA EN EMOI HAMARTIA · "SIN WHICH DWELLS IN ME" · G3611

Oikeō (G3611) is to dwell, to live in a house — and the same verb is used of the Spirit in 8:9, 11: "if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." Two tenants are named in two chapters. Verses 17 and 20 say the same thing twice, "no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me" — not an excuse (the deeds are still his, v. 15) but a diagnosis: the "I" that wills the good is not the whole story. Verse 18 puts the problem in one line: *to thelein*, the willing, is present; *to katergazesthai*, the accomplishing, is not.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads "carnal" as "of the flesh": a spiritual law cannot help a carnal man, any more than a prisoner can be freed by reading the rules of his prison. But Paul's carnality does not mean he is not a Christian — "His awareness of carnality shows that God did a work in him," and he quotes Luther that the spiritual man "knows that he is carnal, and he is displeased with himself." The issue is not desire or knowledge but power: the Law gives rules, not strength. "The new man is the real Paul; now Paul's challenge is to live like God has made him." Was Paul a Christian here? "In a sense this is an irrelevant question, for this is the struggle of anyone who tries to obey God in their own strength."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul is emphatic in "Law Cannot Save from Sin (Part 1)": Paul "writes in the present tense about this painful, ongoing struggle in his life," and "I find absolutely no justification whatsoever for finding in this text anything other than the contemporary struggle." Love for the Law is one of the "sentiments that you do not find in unregenerate people." He uses Augustine's horse: before conversion only one rider is on it, but after regeneration "the rest of your life is the battle between two jockeys regarding who will ride this horse." The text refutes perfectionism and any "second work of grace" — it took him, he confesses, twenty-five years to go one day without smoking. In Part 2, drawing on Edwards: "Part of me wants to obey Christ but not all of me."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon will not let the cry belong to an unconverted man: "It is Paul, the saint and the apostle, who here exclaims, 'O wretched man that I am!'" Those who say otherwise are, in his words, "evidently mistaken." In "The Fainting Warrior" (No. 235, 1859) he explains the war by two natures. The unregenerate have only one; the believer receives a new, divine nature, yet "the old nature is in the Christian unchanged, unaltered, just the same, as bad as ever it was." It cannot be improved, and the new nature cannot sin — so they fight. In his exposition he keeps verse 14 straight: the Law is spiritual and good; the trouble is the carnal man, sold under sin.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry sets out both readings honestly — a convicted but unregenerate man, or a sanctified man with remaining corruption — and chooses the second: "It seems rather to be understood of the struggles that are maintained between grace and corruption in sanctified souls." It is hard, he says, to imagine why Paul would speak all along in his own person and in the present tense if he meant someone else. And in this paragraph the good is on the winning side: the man hates his sin, consents to the Law that it is good, and wills what is right. Those are the marks, for Henry, not of a man under sin's dominion but of a believer in whom sin still dwells.

IV
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 7:21–25

Wretched Man — Thanks Be to God

Two laws at war, one cry for rescue, and the answer that is a Person

21 *I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.* 22 *For* ☆ *I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,* 23 *but I see a different* ⟳ *law in the members of my body,* ◷ *waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the* ⟳ *law of sin which is in my members.* 24 ⚠ *Wretched man that I am!* ◷ *Who will set me free from the body of this death?* 25 △ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself* ◷ *with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the* ⟳ *law of sin.*

ROMANS 7:21–25

συνήδομαι … ἀντιστρατευόμενον … αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με

SYNĒDOMAI · ANTISTRATEUOMENON · AICHMALŌTIZONTA · G4913, G497, G163

Three rare words make the battlefield. *Synēdomai* (G4913), "I joyfully concur," occurs only here in the New Testament: to rejoice together with, to delight in — "in the inner man" (*kata ton esō anthrōpon*). Against it, *antistrateuomai* (G497), "waging war against," also only here — a campaign mounted by an opposing army. And its aim: *aichmalōtizō* (G163), to take captive in war, the word for prisoners led away (Luke 21:24), which Paul turns around in 2 Corinthians 10:5 — "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Note also verse 21: "the principle" is *ton nomon*, the same word as "law." The paragraph has four laws: God's, the mind's, sin's, and the one Paul "finds."

ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται

TALAIPŌROS · RHYSETAI · "WRETCHED … WHO WILL SET ME FREE?" · G5005, G4506

Talaipōros (G5005) is "wretched, miserable" — Strong's gives "enduring trial," and HELPS derives it from roots for bearing and a callus, someone worn down by continued strain. The question is *tis*, "who," not "what": the cry has stopped looking for a method. *Rhyomai* (G4506) is "to rescue, deliver," a middle-voice verb, drawing someone out of danger to oneself. The answer comes at once: *charis tō theō*, "thanks be to God," through Jesus Christ (the manuscripts behind the KJV read *eucharistō*, "I thank God"). Then the sober close, *autos egō*, "I myself": with the mind serving the law of God, with the flesh the law of sin — until 8:1.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears in "wretched" a man worn out by hard labor. For "the body of this death" he notes that some see ancient kings who tormented prisoners by chaining them to decomposing corpses, and he quotes Spurgeon's version of the image ("It was the custom of ancient tyrants…"); with Calvin and Murray he takes it as "the whole mass of sin." The turn is in the question: Paul stops asking about himself and asks *who*. And the answer is not more instruction. Guzik walks through it — a teacher, a coach or a doctor will not do, because "You don't need a teacher, you need a Savior." Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "Law Cannot Save from Sin (Part 3)" Sproul hears Paul refusing to excuse himself: "Paul recognizes where sin dwells: It dwells in him." A man who delights in God's law is the man of Psalm 1, not an unbeliever. Against a culture of self-esteem he says the church's problem is not too much guilt — "We do not hate sin the way we should hate it." He keeps the body good (*sōma* is not *sarx*; the ascetics were wrong), and he will not leave Paul in misery: "The answer to 'Who will deliver me?' is God." Then 8:1 — the "therefore" gathers all Paul has said about justification, and "there is no condemnation for what you will do tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

"The Fainting Warrior" gives the old nature its true name, "the body of this death," and the tyrants' image: "to tie a dead body to them, placing the two back to back" — "it is death incarnate, death concentrated." Paul is a panting soldier holding two truths at once, his duty to obey and his inability to do it — but he does not stay down: "he lets fly against him once more, shouting, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'" What is within, he says, "is like a caged eagle" that will one day fly. In "The Dual Nature and the Duel Within" (No. 1459B, on v. 23): "The dual life provokes a daily duel." "We do sin, but we hate sin." The unbeliever knows no such warfare.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

To others Paul looked blessed, Henry observes, but "in his own account he was a wretched man, because of the corruption of nature" — "A man that had learned in every state to be content yet complains thus of his corrupt nature." He offers more than one reading of "the body of this death," and settles on indwelling corruption: "It was as troublesome to Paul as if he had had a dead body tied to him, which he must have carried about with him." In verse 22 he finds the believer's mark: "All that are savingly regenerate or born again do truly delight in the law of God." And the cure for the groan is praise: "It is a special remedy against fears and sorrows to be much in praise: many a poor drooping soul hath found it so."

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

Died to the Law, alive to God — and the same war in other letters

> *"For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*
>
> GALATIANS 2:19–20

> *"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."*
>
> GALATIANS 5:17

> *"who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 3:6

> *"But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,"*
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 1:8

> *"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night."*
>
> PSALM 1:2

> *"as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 3:6

> *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."*
>
> 1 JOHN 1:8

> *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."*
>
> ROMANS 8:1–2

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul reads Romans 7 and 8 as one breath. The "therefore" of 8:1 is a conclusion drawn from everything Paul has taught about justification, and it reaches the very failures chapter 7 confesses: Christ bore the condemnation at the cross, and the Father will not demand it twice — not for yesterday, and not for tomorrow.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's line from "The Monster Dragged to Light" could stand over the whole chapter and the whole Bible's use of the Law: "Unless sin is seen to be sin, grace will never be seen to be grace."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, four movements. Three of them — Sproul, Spurgeon and Henry — read 7:14–25 as Paul the believer; Guzik says the struggle matters more than the label. On the Law itself all four agree: holy, righteous, good — and powerless to save.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Joined to Another	Dead to law as a way of justification or growth; free to be "married" to Jesus and bear fruit.	The Law did not die — you did, in Christ, who fulfilled it; freedom is no license.	"Jesus is our husband, grace is the ruling principle of his house."	Our first marriage was to the law; it bound us only during its life.
II · Is the Law Sin?	An x-ray that shows what is hidden; a boundary sin is enticed to cross.	The law makes known our sin; it woke the sleeping giant.	"Sin kills men by that which was ordained to life."	Holy, just and good — every commandment; it humbled Paul's good opinion of himself.
III · The War Within	Awareness of carnality shows God's work; the question of who is secondary to the struggle.	Present tense, present struggle — the regenerate Paul; two jockeys on one horse.	Paul the saint and apostle; the old nature unchanged, the new nature at war.	Struggles between grace and corruption in sanctified souls — he weighs the other view and declines it.
IV · Thanks Be to God	Worn-out laborer chained to a corpse; you need a Savior, not a teacher.	Sin dwells in him; the answer to "who" is God; then no condemnation.	Death incarnate tied back to back — yet he rises shouting thanks.	As if a dead body were tied to him; praise is the remedy for drooping souls.

ROMANS 7:1–25 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The Law did not die — you did.** Paul's illustration has the husband die, but his application has the wife die (v. 4). The Law is not abolished; the believer has died to its claim by dying with Christ, and is free to belong to Another. SPROUL
- **Every marriage bears fruit.** The same verb, *karpophoreō*, names both harvests: "fruit for death" (v. 5) and "fruit for God" (v. 4). The question is never whether a life is fruitful, but to whom it is joined. THE GREEK
- **The Law is an x-ray, not the disease.** It "reveals what is there but hidden." Blaming the commandment for my sin is blaming the film for the tumor. GUZIK
- **Sin needs a base of operations.** *Aphormē* is a military staging point: sin seized the commandment and launched its attack from it (vv. 8, 11). The tenth commandment — the one about desire — was the beachhead. THE GREEK
- **Sin brings evil out of good.** "The Lord brings good out of evil, but sin brings evil out of good." The proof of how bad sin is: it can turn God's holy Law into a weapon of death. SPURGEON
- **Eden in one man's story.** A command given for life, a deceiver who uses it (*exapataō*, the verb for the serpent and Eve), and death (vv. 10–11). Paul tells his own fall in the shape of the first one. THE TEXT
- **Delight in God's law is a sign of new life.** "All that are savingly regenerate or born again do truly delight in the law of God." Henry, Sproul and Spurgeon all make verse 22 the hinge of their reading. HENRY
- **The struggle is real, whatever the label.** Guzik calls the identity question, in a sense, irrelevant: this is the struggle of anyone who tries to obey God in his own strength — and the cure is the same. GUZIK

- **"Who," not "what."** The cry of verse 24 stops asking for a method and asks for a Rescuer — and the answer is a Person: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" THE TEXT
- **The struggle is a sign of life.** "We do sin, but we hate sin." The unbeliever knows no such warfare; the believer who feels it should not despair of grace because of it. SPURGEON

† Questions for the Table

1 **In Paul's picture, who dies — the Law or you? Why does that difference matter for how you see God's commands today?**

The Law still stands and is holy; you died to its claim in Christ (v. 4). Freedom is not lawlessness but a new marriage that bears fruit for God (Sproul: no license to sin).

7:1-6; Galatians 2:19-20

2 **Where has a "do not" stirred up the very desire it forbids in you? What does that show about the commandment, and about you?**

Sin takes the commandment as its base of operations (v. 8); the fault is in us, not in the Law (Guzik). Augustine's pears, Prohibition, the tenth commandment.

7:7-11

3 **Why does Paul insist the Law is "holy and righteous and good" right after saying it killed him?**

Sin did the killing, using the Law; the Law only exposed how utterly sinful sin is (v. 13). Spurgeon: sin brings evil out of good.

7:12-13; 1 Timothy 1:8

4 **Who do you think the "I" of verses 14–25 is? Which line in the text weighs most with you, and why?**

Weigh v. 14 ("sold into bondage") and v. 22 ("joyfully concur"); Sproul, Spurgeon and Henry hold the believer reading; Guzik says the struggle is the same either way.

7:14-25; Galatians 5:17

5 **What is the difference between "sin which dwells in me" as a diagnosis and as an excuse?**

The deeds are still his (v. 15) and he hates them; Sproul: "Paul recognizes where sin dwells: It dwells in him." Ownership and hope together.

7:17-20; 1 John 1:8

6 **When you cry "Who will set me free?", where do you usually look first — a method, a program, or a Person?**

The question is "who," and the answer is thanks to God through Jesus Christ (v. 25), then no condemnation (8:1). Guzik: you need a Savior, not a teacher.

7:24-25; Romans 8:1-2

Romans 7 refuses two easy answers: that the Law is the enemy, and that a believer is beyond the fight. The commandment is holy and the struggle is real, and neither one is the end of the story. The last word belongs to the One who answers "Who will set me free?" — thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; the Romans volume of his *Commentary* was completed by his successors (John Evans) from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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