SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Romans 7

The Law, the Flesh, and the Deliverer — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-09 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God set me free from the Law's claim by joining me to the risen Christ, and the Law is still holy — it shows me my sin, but it cannot make me good. When I find myself doing what I hate, the answer is not a better rule but a Rescuer: thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

00 The Text

ROMANS 7 (NASB95), MARKED

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Marked in the text

- **v4** “you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” — God — His character & actions
- **v4** “joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead” — Promise / blessing
- **v4** “bear fruit for God” — Promise / blessing
- **v5** “the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “bear fruit for death” — Sin / warning
- **v6** “we have been released from the Law” — Promise / blessing
- **v6** “newness of the Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v6** “oldness of the letter” — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** “YOU SHALL NOT COVET” — Command / instruction
- **v8** “sin, taking opportunity through the commandment” — Sin / warning
- **v9** “sin became alive and I died” — Sin / warning
- **v11** “deceived me and through it killed me” — Sin / warning
- **v12** “the Law is holy” — God — His character & actions
- **v12** “holy and righteous and good” — God — His character & actions
- **v13** “sin would become utterly sinful” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “the Law is spiritual” — God — His character & actions
- **v14** “sold into bondage to sin” — Sin / warning
- **v15** “I am doing the very thing I hate” — Sin / warning
- **v18** “nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” — Sin / warning
- **v22** “I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man” — Promise / blessing
- **v23** “waging war against the law of my mind” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “Wretched man that I am!” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “Who will set me free from the body of this death?” — Time / place / contrast
- **v25** “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “with my mind am serving the law of God” — Time / place / contrast
- **v17** “sin which dwells in me” — Sin / warning (every occurrence)
- **v7** “May it never be!” — Time / place / contrast (every occurrence)
- **v1** “law” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

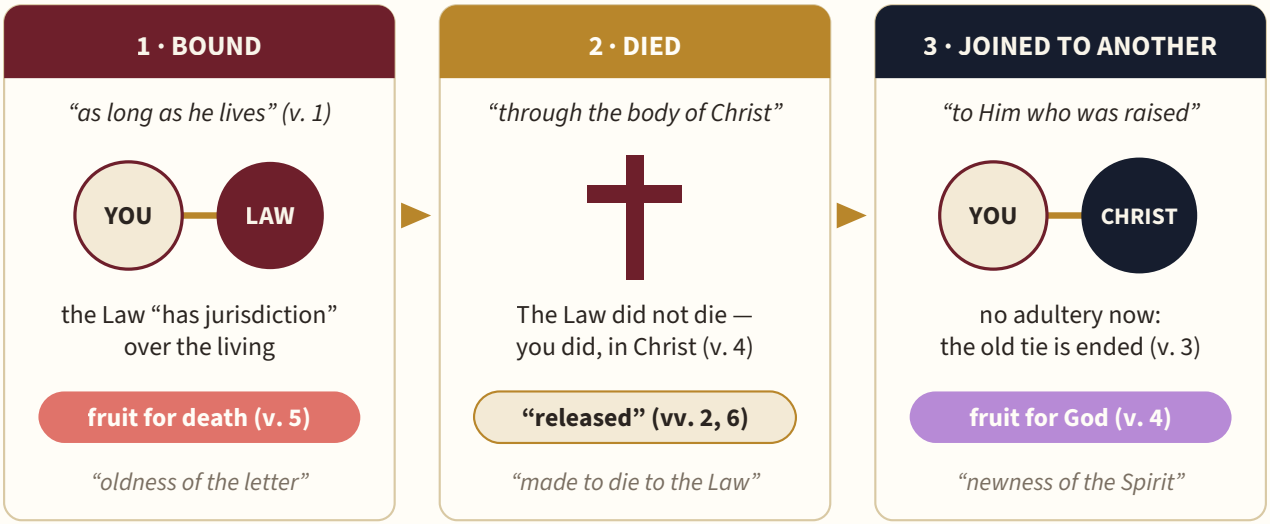
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 7:12

"So then, ⚠ the Law is holy, and the commandment is ⚠ holy and righteous and good."

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.

Setting. Paul turns to "those who know the law" (v1) — Jewish believers and synagogue-taught Gentiles in Rome. He has just said "you are not under law but under grace" (6:14), and "May it never be!" was his answer to "shall we sin?" (6:15). Chapter 7 explains how we were released from the Law and then defends the Law against the charge that it is sin. Chapter 8 follows with "no condemnation."

Structure:

- vv1–3 — **the principle and the picture:** the law has jurisdiction over a person only while he lives; a married woman is bound to her husband while he lives, free if he dies — and no adulteress if she is then joined to another man.
- vv4–6 — **the application:** "you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ," to be joined to Him who was raised from the dead, to bear fruit for God. Then: in the flesh, passions aroused by the Law bore fruit for death (v5); now, released, we serve in newness of the Spirit, not oldness of the letter (v6).
- vv7–12 — **first question: "Is the Law sin?" May it never be!** The Law made sin known — "YOU SHALL NOT COVET" (v7). Sin took opportunity through the commandment and produced coveting of every kind (v8). "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died" (v9). Sin deceived me and killed me (v11). So the Law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good (v12).

- v13 — **second question: did the good become death to me? May it never be!** Sin did it, so that sin would be shown to be sin — "utterly sinful."
- vv14–20 — **the war described:** the Law is spiritual, I am of flesh (v14). I do what I hate (v15); I agree the Law is good (v16); "sin which dwells in me" (vv17, 20); nothing good dwells in my flesh — the willing is present, the doing is not (v18).
- vv21–23 — **the laws at war:** evil present in me, the one who wants to do good (v21); I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man (v22), but a different law in my members wages war against the law of my mind and makes me a prisoner (v23).
- vv24–25 — **the cry and the answer:** "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!" Then the summary: with my mind serving the law of God, with my flesh the law of sin.

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95):

- **law / Law** ×23 — in vv1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 22, 23, 25 (the word is also behind "principle" in v21). "Law of …" ×5: law of God (vv22, 25), law of my mind (v23), law of sin (vv23, 25).
- **sin** ×14 — vv7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, 20, 23, 25; plus **sinful** ×2 (vv5, 13).
- **I** ×29 — 24 of them in vv14–25; **me** ×12 and **my** ×8. In vv7–25 the first person (I, me, my, myself) comes 48 times.
- **commandment** ×6 — every verse from v8 to v13.
- **good** ×8 — vv12, 13 (×2), 16, 18 (×2), 19, 21.
- **do / doing** ×16 in vv14–25 alone; **want / would like / willing / wants** ×7 (vv15–21).
- **death** ×5 (vv5, 10, 13 ×2, 24) and **die / dies / died** ×5 (vv2, 3, 4, 6, 9).
- **dwells** ×3 (vv17, 18, 20); **flesh** ×4 (vv5, 14, 18, 25); **members** ×3 (vv5, 23 ×2).
- **"May it never be!"** ×2 (vv7, 13) — the two questions of the chapter.

Contrasts: bound ⟷ released (vv2, 6); fruit for death ⟷ fruit for God (vv4–5); newness of the Spirit ⟷ oldness of the letter (v6); "to result in life" ⟷ "proved to result in death" (v10); the Law is spiritual ⟷ I am of flesh (v14); what I want ⟷ what I do (vv15, 19); the law of my mind ⟷ the law of sin in my members (v23); inner man ⟷ members; "Wretched man" ⟷ "Thanks be to God" (vv24–25).

Shape of the chapter: a picture (1–6), a defense in two questions (7–13), a confession in the present tense (14–25) — and the confession ends in thanks before it ends in summary. The pronouns tell the story: "you" and "we" in vv1–6, then "I" almost alone from v7 to the end, until the "I" looks away from itself to "Jesus Christ our Lord."

Chapter theme (my words): I died to the Law with Christ and now belong to Him. The Law is holy and shows me my sin, but it cannot set me free; only God through Jesus Christ can.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 7:4

"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."

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.

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.

Who is the husband, and who dies? (vv1–6). The first husband is the Law (Henry: "Our first marriage was to the law"). But Paul bends the picture on purpose: in the illustration the husband dies; in the application the wife does. Sproul: "Paul does not say that the law has died, but you are the one who has died." *Ethanatōthēte* is passive — I was put to death, "through the body of Christ," by being united to Him in His death (6:3–6). Guzik: dead to the law as a principle of justification *or* sanctification; Morris, in Guzik: "Believers are through with the law." The goal is not freedom for its own sake but fruit for God (Guzik: free to be "married" to Jesus). Spurgeon: "Jesus is our husband, grace is the ruling principle of his house, and holiness is the fruit of the marriage." Sproul's guardrail: release from the Law's dominion "does not give us a license to sin." Henry's two pictures of life under the Law: an imperfect dam that only makes the stream of sin swell higher, and the sun on a dunghill.

Is the Law sin? (vv7–12). No — it is the x-ray, not the disease (Guzik: "it reveals what is there but hidden"). Sproul: "The law is not sin, but the law makes known to us our sin." But sin is not passive: it takes the commandment as a base of operations (*aphormē*) and launches desire from it — "coveting of every kind." Guzik: "Once God draws a boundary for us, we are immediately enticed to cross that boundary" (Augustine's pears). Paul names the tenth commandment because it reaches the heart; Spurgeon tells how "Thou shalt not covet" found out Paul himself. "I was once alive apart from the Law" (v9): Henry and Sproul both read this as Paul's self-confidence before the commandment came home — sin was dormant, and Sproul's picture is Yamamoto's "sleeping giant." The verb "deceived" (v11) is the serpent's verb (2 Cor 11:3) — Eden replayed in one man.

Did the good become death? (v13). No — sin did it, using the good, so that sin would be seen as "utterly sinful" (*kath' hyperbolēn*, beyond measure). Spurgeon: "Sin kills men by that which was ordained to life"; "The Lord

brings good out of evil, but sin brings evil out of good"; "Unless sin is seen to be sin, grace will never be seen to be grace."

Who is the "I" of vv14–25? This is the chapter's great question, and good men differ. Three main readings:

- **A believer now (regenerate Paul).** The verbs turn to the present tense at v14 and stay there; the man hates his sin (v15), agrees that the Law is good (v16), and "joyfully concurs with the law of God in the inner man" (v22); and v25b comes *after* the thanksgiving. **Sproul:** "I find absolutely no justification whatsoever for finding in this text anything other than the contemporary struggle"; love for the Law is among "sentiments that you do not find in unregenerate people." **Spurgeon:** "It is Paul, the saint and the apostle, who here exclaims"; those who read it otherwise are "evidently mistaken." **Henry**, after weighing the other view: "the struggles that are maintained between grace and corruption in sanctified souls."
- **An awakened but unregenerate man under the Law.** Its strongest lines: "sold into bondage to sin" (v14), "nothing good dwells in me" (v18), "a prisoner of the law of sin" (v23) — set against 6:18 ("freed from sin") and 8:2 ("set you free"). Henry names this reading and sets it aside; none of our four holds it.
- **Paul recalling his own past under the Law.** vv7–13 are past tense ("I was once alive," v9), and this reading takes the present tense of vv14–25 as vivid recollection (compare Phil 3:6, "found blameless"). Sproul names it — the reading perfectionists use — and rejects it on the grammar.
- **Guzik** frames the question differently: "In a sense this is an irrelevant question, for this is the struggle of anyone who tries to obey God in their own strength." Yet he leans toward the believer: "His awareness of carnality shows that God did a work in him," and "The new man is the real Paul."

My own take for the table: the text gives weight on both sides, and the teachers I trust most here (Sproul, Spurgeon, Henry) read it of the believer. What all four agree on is the point Paul is making: the Law — however holy — gives no power; the willing is present, the doing is not, and the rescue is a Person.

Sin which dwells in me (vv17, 20). Not an excuse but a diagnosis. Sproul: "Paul recognizes where sin dwells: It dwells in him." The same verb (*oikeō*) is used of the Spirit dwelling in us in 8:9 — two tenants, two chapters. Sproul (from Augustine): after regeneration "the rest of your life is the battle between two jockeys regarding who will ride this horse"; from Edwards, "Part of me wants to obey Christ but not all of me." Spurgeon: the old nature is "unchanged, unaltered, just the same, as bad as ever it was"; "The dual life provokes a daily duel"; "We do sin, but we hate sin." Sproul also rejects the "carnal Christian" who lives in unrepentant sin as an excuse: "There is no such thing as a carnal Christian who is completely carnal."

Wretched man — and the answer (vv24–25). *Talaipōros*: worn down by strain (Guzik: worn out by hard labor). "The body of this death": Spurgeon and Henry both use the picture of a corpse tied to a living man (Henry: "as if he had had a dead body tied to him"); Guzik notes the ancient tyrants' cruelty and, with Calvin and Murray, "the whole mass of sin." The question is "who," not "what." Guzik: "You don't need a teacher, you need a Savior." Sproul: "The answer to 'Who will deliver me?' is God." Spurgeon: the fainting warrior rises "shouting, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'" Henry: "It is a special remedy against fears and sorrows to be much in praise." And then 8:1 — Sproul: no condemnation even "for what you will do tomorrow."

Word study (Greek):

- **has jurisdiction — *kyrieuō* (G2961):** to rule as lord; the same verb as 6:9, 14.
- **made to die — *thanatoō* (G2289):** to put to death; passive — it was done to us, through Christ's body.
- **released — *katargeō* (G2673):** made inoperative, its claim switched off (vv2, 6).

- **bear fruit — *karpophoreō* (G2592):** to bear fruit; fruit for God (v4) or for death (v5).
- **newness — *kainotēs* (G2538):** a new kind of thing; only here and 6:4.
- **opportunity — *aphormē* (G874):** a starting point, "a base of operations" (Thayer).
- **coveting — *epithymia* (G1939):** desire for what is forbidden; verb *epithymeō* (G1937).
- **became alive — *anazaō* (G326):** to come back to life; sin was only sleeping.
- **deceived — *exapataō* (G1818):** to deceive thoroughly; the serpent's verb (2 Cor 11:3).
- **utterly — *hyperbolē* (G5236):** a throwing beyond; beyond measure.
- **of flesh — *sarkinos* (G4560):** made of flesh, fleshly.
- **sold — *pipraskō* (G4097):** to sell, as into slavery; perfect passive — sold, and still under it.
- **joyfully concur — *synēdomai* (G4913):** to delight in; only here in the NT.
- **waging war against — *antistrateuomai* (G497):** to make war against; only here in the NT.
- **making me a prisoner — *aichmalōtizō* (G163):** to take captive in war (cf. 2 Cor 10:5).
- **wretched — *talaipōros* (G5005):** miserable, worn down by continued trial.
- **set free — *rhyomai* (G4506):** to rescue, draw out of danger to oneself.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. The Law did not die — you did, in Christ (Sproul).
2. Every marriage bears fruit; the question is to whom (*karpophoreō*, vv4–5).
3. The Law is an x-ray, not the disease (Guzik).
4. Sin needs a base of operations — and it took the commandment (*aphormē*).
5. "The Lord brings good out of evil, but sin brings evil out of good" (Spurgeon).
6. Verse 11 is Eden in one man's story — a command for life, a deceiver, and death.
7. Delight in God's law is a mark of the new birth (Henry; Sproul; Spurgeon).
8. The struggle is real whatever the label (Guzik).
9. "Who," not "what": the answer is a Person (v25).
10. "We do sin, but we hate sin" — the war itself is a sign of life (Spurgeon).

Cross-references: Gal 2:19–20 · Gal 5:16–18 · 2 Cor 3:6 · 1 Tim 1:8 · Ps 1:2 · Phil 3:6 · 1 John 1:8–9 · Rom 6:14, 18 · Rom 8:1–4, 9 · Ex 20:17

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

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!"

Truth to stand on — I died to the Law with Christ and I belong to Him now (v4). I don't have to earn His love by keeping rules, and I don't get a license to sin either. I'm married to the risen Lord, and the point of a marriage is fruit. Today I ask: what fruit is my life bearing, and for whom?

Sin to confess — I know the "do not" that makes me want the thing more. For me it's __ (I'll name it, to God and to one brother). The commandment is not the problem; the coveting in me is. I won't blame the Law, my past, or the people around me — and I won't hide behind "sin which dwells in me" as an excuse. The deeds are mine. The diagnosis is honest so the cure can be real.

Promise to trust — "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v25) and "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). When I fall, the fight is not proof that I am lost; Spurgeon says the unbeliever knows no such warfare. I can hate my sin and still rest in my Savior.

Example to follow — Paul's honesty. An apostle wrote "Wretched man that I am!" in a letter to a church he had never visited. The men I sit with — in recovery, behind the walls, at my own table — need leaders who will admit "I fight this too," and then point past themselves to Christ. I'll do that this week.

Practice for the week — Sproul's counsel on the will: we choose by our strongest inclination, so feed the new man and starve the old. Concretely: (1) a daily time in the Word and prayer before my phone; (2) one accountability call when the pull is strongest; (3) remove one "base of operations" sin has been using in my house or my habits.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

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 (v4). Freedom is a new marriage that bears fruit for God. — 7:1–6; Gal 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 (v8); the fault is in us, not in the Law (Guzik). — 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 (v13). — 7:12–13; 1 Tim 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 v14 and v22; Sproul, Spurgeon and Henry hold the believer reading; Guzik says the struggle is the same either way. — 7:14–25; Gal 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 (v15) and he hates them; 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 (v25), then no condemnation (8:1). — 7:24–25; Rom 8:1–2*

Worship. Henry says praise is “a special remedy against fears and sorrows.” So I’ll end the struggle the way Paul did — not with a resolution but with thanks. Sing or read something that names Jesus as Rescuer, and say verse 25 out loud.

Prayer. Father, Your Law is holy and righteous and good, and it has shown me my sin. I confess that I have done what I hate and left undone what I wanted to do. I will not blame Your commandment, and I will not excuse myself. Thank You that I died to the Law through the body of Christ and that I belong to Him who was raised from the dead. Make my life bear fruit for You. When I cry, “Who will set me free?”, turn my eyes from myself to Jesus. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. In His name, Amen.

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