

Romans 7:1-25

Grasping what Paul writes in Romans 7 has significant implications for our understanding of how the law functions in the Christian life.

By virtue of the believer's representative union with Christ, the believer is dead to the law and now married to another, Christ (**Rom. 7:1-3**).

This does not mean that believers have no relationship to the law, however.

For those justified in Christ the law serves as a rule of life informing them of the will of God and their duty to please God by living accordingly (**Rom 7:4-6**).

Summary

In Romans 7:1-25, Paul deals with another possible objection regarding the law, addressing the issues of the believer's freedom from the law and the way in which God used the law in redemptive history.

1. Power of Sin vv. 7-13

How can a person be free from the law? How can sin use the law in such a manner that it incites transgression rather than promotes holiness?

How can Paul seemingly place the law and holiness at odds?

These are the questions that Paul answers in the rest of chapter 7

He asks about the nature of the law: **Rom. 7:13** 'Did that which is good, then, bring death to me?' He answers: '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.'

Put a sign out "Do NOT walk on the grass" and it is not long before someone is walking on the grass.

This is why Paul says **Rom. 7:8b** For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

2. Intriguing "I" of Romans 7 vv. 7-24

Of whom is Paul speaking when he says, "I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died" (**Rom. 7:9**)?

Who is in view when Paul writes, "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (**Rom. 7:15**)?

Over the centuries scholars have taken one of two positions:

1) Paul's own personal experience. Rom 7 is largely autobiographical.

2) Paul does not reflect exclusively on his own personal experience, whether pre- or post-conversion but reflects on Adam's struggle under God's command in the garden and on Israel's collective experience under the law.

In the book of Romans, Paul often has the big picture in view, the grand sweep of redemptive history, not merely the state or condition of individuals.

If you are under Adam, then you are under law, but if you are under Christ, you are under grace (**Rom. 6:14-15**). This is still in view in Romans 7.

3. Divine Deliverance vv. 25

How was Paul and any other Israelite delivered from this love-hate relationship to God's law? How could Israel break free from their "delight in the law of God" in their "inner being" (**Rom. 7:22**) but at the same time see another law "waging war against the law" of their minds, making them captive to "the law of sin" (**Rom. 7:23**)? Who delivered Paul and every other Israelite who sought freedom from their wretched state under the law (**Rom. 7:24**)?

Paul comes full circle and returns to his glorious theme of the last several chapters:

Rom. 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Through Christ we have died to the law and have been justified from it to serve the Lord in the newness of life (cf. **Gal. 3:22-26**).

Grasping Paul's point regarding the freedom from the law has the greatest implications for the Christian life. Far too many Christians look at the law of God as the means by which they either save themselves or make themselves holier.

Apart from Christ and His bond-breaking work freeing us from the law as a covenant whether in Adam's covenant of works or Israel's covenant at Sinai, we are slaves to sin and held captive under its power through the law.

Promotion of the law apart from Christ and His gospel is an effort to bring the believer back under the enslavement of the law.

However unintentionally, it is an effort to change the role of the law in the life of the Christian from a rule to a covenant. However inadvertently, it tries to move Christians out from under grace and place them back under law.

Christ-focused preaching empowers believers' holiness, transforms them more into the image of Christ, and produces the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Christians will then, God willing, seek the law as a rule, not as a covenant--they will seek holiness through the Spirit, not in the deadness of the old written code (**Rom. 7:6**).

4. Irresistible Conclusion

The justification of the believer by faith alone in Christ alone frees us from the legal power of sin and the imprisonment to the law. Because of our union with Christ and our accompanying sanctification, Christians will never engage in unchecked lawlessness. Only in Christ do we find our justification. Only in Christ do we find our sanctification and freedom from sin. Only in Christ is the law transformed from a foe into a friend.