



# ROMANS

## Lesson 7: The Futility of Trying to Keep the Law

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Chuck Swindoll writes, "Once a believer has died to sin 'in Christ' his or her relationship with the law is forever changed. The new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33) gives us a new rule of life: the Holy Spirit (7:1-6). God gave the law to humanity to confront our unrighteousness and to demonstrate our need for salvation.

### A. MAIN IDEA

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Once a person abandons his or her futile attempt to keep the law and then receives God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ the law has served its purpose. The believer's relationship with the law is now severed.<sup>1</sup>

### B. CENTRAL QUESTION

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How are Christians to deal with the internal struggle between the old sinful nature and the new nature?

### C. ROMANS CHAPTER 7 (NLT)

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#### 1. The Two Positions of the Law to Man (7:1-6)

a) The law dominates man only as long as he lives (7:1-3)

*Now, dear brothers and sisters-- you who are familiar with the law-- don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living? 2 For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. 3 So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.*

b) Position 1: the law is dead to believers (7:4)

*So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.*

- c) Position 2: the law is alive to those controlled by the sinful nature (7:5)  
*When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death.*
- d) The law is inactivated by conversions (7:6)  
*But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.*

## **2. The Purpose of the Law (7:7-13)**

- a) Is the law sin, that is, evil? (7:7a)  
*Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful?*
- b) The law reveals the fact of sin (7:7b)  
*Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet."*
- c) The law gives sin the opportunity to be aroused and to work every kind of evil (7:8)  
*But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.*
- d) The law reveals the fact of condemnation and death (7:9-10)  
*At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, <sup>10</sup> and I died. So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead.*
- e) The law reveals the deceitfulness of sin (7:11)  
*Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me.*
- f) The law reveals the way of God: holiness, righteousness, and goodness (7:12)  
*But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.*
- g) The law shows the reality of sin, the extent of its wickedness, and the fact that it is the cause of death (7:13)  
*But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes.*

## **3. The Six Confessions of a Man's Struggling Soul (7:14-25)**

- a) Confession 1: he knows that the law is spiritual (7:14)

*So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good.*

- b) Confession 2: he is unspiritual, carnal, a slave to sin (7:14-17)

*The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup> I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. <sup>16</sup> But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*

- c) Confession 3: he is empty of anything good (7:18-20)

*And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. <sup>19</sup> I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. <sup>20</sup> But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*

- d) Confession 4: he finds two laws or forces within (7:21-23)

*I have discovered this principle of life-- that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. <sup>22</sup> I love God's law with all my heart. <sup>23</sup> But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.*

- e) Confession 5: he is a desperate, wretched man who needs a Savior (7:24)

*Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?*

- f) Confession 6: the Savior I need is Jesus Christ (7:25)

*Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.*

## **D. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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1. (7:1-3) What point was Paul making about the Mosaic Law with the illustration of a wife-husband relationship?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. (7:5) What is it within us that makes us want to do something we are told we are not to do?

3. (7:12) In what ways is the Mosaic Law good?

4. (7:15-24) What was Paul describing about himself in this verse?

5. How are Christians to deal with the internal struggle between the old sinful nature and the new nature? (Hint: see <https://www.gotquestions.org/two-natures.html>).



6. What was the Mosaic Law expected to accomplish? (Hint: see <https://www.gotquestions.org/Mosaic-Law.html>)



## E. APPLICATION

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So, what is our duty now as believers saved by grace? Our primary purpose is to know Jesus Christ personally with ever deepening intimacy (Phil. 3:8-11).

*Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, <sup>11</sup> so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (Phil. 3:8-11 NLT)*

### Sources used in this study

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<sup>1</sup> (Swindoll 165)