

Romans 7

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Tape #8124
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Chapter seven, actually takes up at verse fourteen of chapter six. For in verse fourteen, Paul said, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." The rest of the sixth chapter is parenthetical. Here in chapter seven, he picks up that idea again. He continues from that concept that you are not under law but under grace. And so you need to really think of this now in chapter seven under the title of, "You are not under law by under grace."

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), So this first part is addressed to the Jewish people. Not talking to Gentiles at this point. He will in a moment. But right now to Jewish people. *Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law) that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?* As long as you are alive, law has dominion over you.

And then he uses an illustration of how one is bound to another as long as they live, but how that death frees that bond. *²For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ³So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.* Now it is not Paul's intent here to teach on marriage. He is only using this as an illustration of how that death frees a person from the bonds that existed under the law. So that as long as a person lives he is under the law. Only death frees you from that relationship to the law, even as only death frees a wife from her husband.

⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another--to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. You are not under law. You are under grace. You are under law as long as you live, but we have died with Christ. We have been crucified with Christ. And thus the fact that I am dead with Christ, buried with the likeness of His death and risen in that newness of life. In that new life that I now have in Christ, I am no longer under the law, but I'm under grace because of death with Christ. It has freed me from the law.

⁵For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. ⁶But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Or not in the fine points of the law. The letter of the law. So our relationship now and the Jewish relationship to the law. You are dead. Not unto law but unto grace. But as Paul goes on in the chapter, he turns from just a pure Jewish standpoint, to deal with all of us who have had our consciences made alive through the Spirit of God. We who have come to Jesus Christ. And having to come to Jesus Christ, we have this excitement over the Lord and the things of the Lord! And we find there is a desire in our hearts now to please the Lord. To do those things that He would have us to do. To live the life that He wants us to live. And so in this endeavor that we now have to live the life, you know the first little bit of your Christian experiences are so thrilling and so exciting, all you can think about is Jesus! And you're just bubbling over with your excitement and your joy in your love for Him. And then we begin to settle down. And I realize that the Lord has required that I love like He loves, that I show mercy like He shows mercy, that I be kind as He is kind, tenderhearted, forgiving. So I say, yes, that's right. I should be that way. I will be that way. And then, we as Paul, come to the discovery of this

nature of sin. And how we in ourselves are incapable of being what God would have us to be. The weakness of our flesh. With Peter, the spirit indeed is willing, but our flesh is weak. But we come to the consciousness and awareness of the sin within our nature or that nature of sin. So Paul declares when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. Paul points out and recognizes that the law was not intended to be a standard that you can live by in order to be righteous before God. The law properly understood, reveals unto us the sinfulness of our nature. And how far short we have come of God's standards. And so by the law we have then, this awareness and consciousness of our sin.

And so Paul goes on to say ⁷*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."* So Paul is declaring that the law was intended to reveal sin and our sinful nature. I had not known that it was wrong to desire that which belongs to someone else, except the law said, "You shall not covet." And in Deuteronomy it listed several things. Thy neighbor's house or thy neighbor's wife or thy neighbor's donkey or whatever. We're not to covet something that belongs to our neighbor. And yet how many of you have never desired something that belonged to someone else? How many of you can plead innocent when you saw your neighbor drive up with his new sports car? We all have been guilty of coveting.

⁸*But sin,* (And here is the problem. This sinful nature of mine. The law isn't sin. It's a revealer of sin.) *taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.* I wasn't conscious of my sin until I understood the law. The moment I understood the law then I became conscious of my sin. I began to then have to reckon with this sinful nature. I had to reckon with my desires. I had to start dealing with them because now I realize these are sinful.

So Paul said, ⁹*I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.* I believe that Paul is probably referring when he said I was without the law once, to that experience that he had on the road to Damascus. And when he really met Jesus, committed his life to the Lord, came into the city of Damascus, met Ananias, the disciple who laid hands on him. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. And Paul began to go to the synagogues and preach Christ. It was a new life. It was a new revelation. Suddenly things fell into place. And he realized that Jesus is Lord! And he began to share in the synagogues the scriptures, showing that Jesus was the Messiah. But then Paul headed out to Arabia. For three years there, I believe, is where Paul went through then this struggle as he began now to realize that the law was spiritual. And so I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

¹⁰*And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.* Again for this nature of sin. This sinful nature, ¹¹*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.* One of the most difficult and frustrating things is to try in our flesh to obey the law of God when you recognize it's spiritual. To try in our flesh to love our neighbor as ourselves. I recognize it's a wonderful principle. I say yes that's wonderful. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone of us were more considerate of others? If we were out to help others as much as we are helping ourselves? That I would be more aware of another person's need. Of course, this is something that we are taught through the New Testament. That we should be concerned. That we should care for another's needs. How wonderful that would be. I'm going to be more considerate. I'm going to love others like I love myself. And then we realize the impossibility of our just doing that. We realize our sinful nature. We realize that when he takes that larger piece of pie, and there are only two pieces left. How could he do that? I wanted that piece. And even a little bit of resentment begins to grow. He's always that way. Looking out for himself first. That creep! And you know it begins to grow on us. No, not that we want it to.

But that's just my nature. And so sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. It destroyed me.

¹²*Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*

¹³*Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not!* It's this sinful nature. That's the problem! There is nothing wrong with the law. It is good! It's me. It's this nature of sin that I have.

But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. That I might realize just how sinful I am. So that I'm not trying reformation any longer. I realize that the answer isn't in reformation. The only hope is transformation. So then Paul begins to account for us his own struggle.

But he declares, ¹⁴*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.* I am carnal. I have this sinful nature. Now Paul recognizes that the desires in his heart are right. The problem is the ability to perform the desires of his heart. Recognizing that the law is spiritual. It deals with a man's attitude more than his actions.

Now, the Pharisees were interested in keeping the law from an outward standpoint. The law said to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. You shall not bear any burden or do any servile work on the Sabbath day. All right, we want to keep the Sabbath day holy. We don't want to bear any burden. So they sat down and determined how many nails you should have in your sandal or how many you could have in your sandal before it constituted bearing a burden. If you had one extra nail, if you went over the limit, you are bearing a burden on the Sabbath day. You can't wear those sandals on the Sabbath day. I mean, if you have false teeth. If you put them in on the Sabbath day, is that bearing a burden? If you have a wooden leg and you strap it on, on the Sabbath day, does that constitute bearing a burden? And so they so interested in these little intricacies. All in the outward aspect. So blinded were they by their laws that through their interpreting of the law they would hinder the work of God in a person's life, because it's the Sabbath day. Look how many run-ins Jesus had with the Pharisees because He was helping people on the Sabbath day. Constantly, there was this conflict. And that was the conflict over the Sabbath day. And Jesus violating in their minds the Sabbath day laws, was what created their determination that we are going to kill Him! That was the issue. It was over this Sabbath day observance.

Jesus came into the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath day. There was a man there with a withered hand. And immediately they all looked at Him to see if He would heal that man because it was the Sabbath day. Jesus caught on in a hurry what was going on. He saw the whispers. He saw the commotion as they were looking at this man with a withered hand and looking back at Jesus. So He said to the man with the withered hand. Stand up. Oh, oh, face off. This is it. What's He going to do? And it says that He said it to them, is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil? To heal or to kill? And it said that He looked on them with anger. Why? Because they through their foolish tradition of the outward observances would hold back the work of God for a man who had a withered hand. They would rather the man go out of the synagogue with a withered hand than to be healed on the Sabbath day. That's how they had gotten so bound up in the outward observance that they lost the spirit.

Now coming to the realization that the law is spiritual. It's the attitude in my heart that is more important than my actions because if I have a wrong attitude in my heart, I could be as guilty as the one who has the wrong action. For it is out of the heart that proceed the murders and the thefts and the adulteries and the fornications, that something that is in a person's heart. The attitude. It brings to life the action. And because a person is not actually doing the murder of another person, yet this anger, this bitterness, this hatred, this uptightness. You are guilty because the law is spiritual. And it deals with the attitudes, the spirit of a man. So we know that the law is spiritual. Paul didn't know that until after he had received Jesus Christ as his Lord. Prior to that Paul was just like the rest of the Pharisees, who was interpreting the law in such a way as he was keeping the law the way he interpreted it. He was keeping

it. He was feeling very smug and self-righteous. As concerning the righteousness which is of the law, Paul said, I was blameless! Like the rich, young ruler that came to Jesus, he said, I've done that all that all of my life. But then Jesus points out attitudes. And He said, well, if you are going to be perfect, then sell everything that you have. Give it to the poor. And come and follow Me. And He pointed out that in the fellow's heart there was that covetousness. It's mine! I won't give it away. And so when you realize that the law is spiritual, if you had a hard time with it just being physical, when you realize that it is spiritual, man, you are dead! I mean, we've, all of us, and that is the purpose of the law, to reveal sin to make the whole world guilty before God. So that being aware of my guilt and my sin, I will be forced to come to Jesus Christ. Only He can forgive through the fact that He died for my sins. So by my faith in Christ, I've been justified. But by my death with Christ, I've been freed from the law. I'm dead to the law. It has no more authority or power over me, I'm dead to the law through my death with Christ. And yet, Paul began to struggle. Having this background in the law, he is now going to seek to please the Lord and be righteous through the keeping and the obedience to the law in his early experience. And I think that Paul is writing this to warn us of the futility to keep us from that trap. But amazing, though we have been given the instruction and warning of Paul, I think that most of us fall into that trap of trying to keep certain rules that will give to me a righteous standing before God. And discovering the weakness of that sinful nature within.

¹⁵*For what I am doing, (He said.) I do not understand.* In other words, I'm doing things that I really don't allow. I know that they are wrong, but yet I'm doing them. Because the law is spiritual, I'm getting upset over petty things. I'm getting angry because of what people are saying about me. I know that I shouldn't but I am. That's what Paul is saying.

For what I will to do, that I do not practice; Now I know that I ought to go visit that person who is sick, but I just don't have the time. Monday night, you know, is football. They wouldn't expect me to visit on Monday night, surely. Oh, yes, I know I should. It's interesting how that there are things that we know that we should do that we don't do. And Paul goes so far as to say that he is doing things that he hates. *but what I hate, that I do.* And many people find themselves in that position. There is a habit and a besetting sin in their life and they are doing it and yet they hate themselves for doing it. And they are vowing and promising I'll never do that again. And they are living in misery, doing the things that they actually hate, bound, by chains and habits.

¹⁶*If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.* You see, I know that's good. And I know that I should do that. Or I know that I shouldn't do that; thus I am consenting to the law. I recognize that the law is right. I'm wrong. What God has said is right. The law is good.

¹⁷*But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.* Now, if I am in this position where I am desiring to do the right but still doing the wrong, consenting that the law is good, then it is no more I that am doing it but it's this sin principle in me. This nature of sin in me. My heart, my desire is to do the right thing. This sinful nature within me is leading me in the wrong path.

¹⁸*For (Paul goes on to say.) I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.* I'm in a turmoil. I have the desire to do the right thing. I want to do the right thing. How to do it? I can't seem to find the key.

¹⁹*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.* ²⁰*Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.* He repeats now. It's not really me. This isn't what I desire. I'm doing what I don't desire. Why? Because of this power of sin. The sinful nature, this body of flesh, in which I still live.

²¹*I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.* ²²*For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.* I not only consent that to the law that it is good, but I delight in the law of God. I delight in the things that Jesus said I should be. I want to love the unlovely as He said I should. He said if I just love those that are very lovable and all, so what? The heathen do that. If

I only loan to someone that I expect to get the money back, with a little interest, so what? The heathen do that. And so I consent, Oh Lord, yes, I want to be kind. I want to be sweet. I want to be generous. I want to be giving. I want to be self sacrificing. I want to do for others. I consent, Lord. I delight in the things in your law according to the inward man.

²³*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* This difficult area of knowing what is right, desiring what is right, but the inability to do what is right!

²⁴*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* So Paul's struggle finally brings him to the acknowledgment of his own inability. I am in this bondage to my flesh. Who shall deliver me? I tried to deliver myself. I can't! Who shall deliver me? Isn't it interesting how we have struggled to deliver ourselves from the motions and the power of the flesh? We go through these struggles. We pray. We cry before God. We repent. Then we promise that we are going to do better. And the very promise to do better is trusting in my flesh. But in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing. I'm not going to find the answers until I search outside myself. Who shall deliver me? It's not how shall I deliver myself? What is the secret formula? What are the ten steps to a victorious life? But it's who shall deliver me? I'm reaching now for power outside of my own.

It's interesting that in the alcoholics anonymous program, they've come to the recognition that a man cannot deliver himself from alcoholism. So one of their steps is recognizing that you can't deliver yourself. Seek for a higher power, God, as you understand Him, to help you. That's an important step.

But it is an important step in our Christian experience. I can't deliver myself from this fleshly nature of sin from the carnality that is in me. I have to have outside help. And God allows me to struggle. God allows me to fail until I come to the place of crying out to Him for help. If I could conquer over these things in my flesh then I would glory not in God, but in what I have done. And I would be boasting to others of what I have done. And I would be writing little success booklets to show others how they can do what I have done and be successful too. But because I can't do it. I have to have help. When the Lord then comes as He does and delivers me from this power of the flesh and this sin nature. When He sets me free and gives me power over it, I recognize it is not me. I couldn't do it! But what I could not do for myself, God has done for me and thus the glory goes to God, the praise to God in acknowledging what the Lord has done! And the praise and glory all goes to God and not to man.

So as we get into chapter eight, Paul will bring out this principle in verse three. For what the law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, (not that the law was bad but it was the weakness of my flesh) God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled, not by me, but in me! And so, O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

So, Paul doesn't leave the seventh chapter in total despair, ²⁵*I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!* There is deliverance. I don't have to be in bondage to my flesh. I don't have to constantly be failing the test. I don't have to constantly be angry and be following the motions of my flesh. Thank God there is help through Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, Yes! My purpose, my heart, it's in my mind. *but with the flesh the law of sin.* That's why it's important that we walk in the Spirit and not after the flesh. So that we have the mind of the Spirit and the life of the Spirit. And so the answer to the struggles that we go through in our Christian walk as we are trying to please God. Only to realize the power of the sinful nature until we are brought to the end of ourselves and we begin to cry out in desperation for help apart from ourselves. We've tried everything and it has failed. Oh, God, help me!

Throughout my Christian experience, the Lord has been showing to me things in my life that are not pleasing to Him. Areas where the flesh is still in control. And this has been going on for years. He seems to deal with things sort of one at a time. And I'm glad for that. Had He shown me everything at

the beginning, I would probably just not even tried, I would have been wiped out! But He shows me one thing at a time, things in my life that He wants to deal with. As He, step by step, is bringing me into the image of Jesus Christ. As He is changing me from glory to glory, into that same image.

But this is the way it generally goes. The Lord will show me this area of my life. He'll show me how ugly it is in His sight. I see it as He sees it. And it is terrible! And I say, Oh, Lord, that's horrible. How could I have ever done that? Oh, Lord, I'll never do that again, I promise. And I do it again. And the Spirit will convict me. And I'll say, how could I? I don't want to do that. It's not right. I won't do it again. I just promise you, Lord. I won't. And then I fail again. And that process continues until I finally recognize that I can't help doing it. There is this other law of the sinful nature, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. And so I finally get to the place, in desperation I cry out, Oh God help me! Deliver me! Set me free! And He does. Once I come to that acknowledgment and recognition. Now a lot of the things are simple. And so when the simple one come along, I say, oh, oh, no problem Lord! You know we will get rid of that right away. And it's often times in those very simple places where I have the greatest difficulty because I am sure I can do that. Some of those really difficult areas, the minute He shows me, I say, no way, Lord, I can't do that. Lord, no way. And He is able to work immediately in those areas. That no flesh should glory in His sight.

Now there is victory for you, no matter what the particular issue is in your life, where the flesh is in control. There is victory for you! Whatever the area of weakness be, God has victory for you. And God wants you to know His victory so that when He delivers, you recognize, "Thanks be unto Jesus Christ. He set me free!"

With my mind I serve the law of God. In my flesh nothing good dwells. And so we come then in chapter eight. And these chapters are tied together so to give the whole message, you have to be here next Sunday night. In chapter eight, Paul then goes on to say, we and all of creation are groaning and travailing together until now as we wait for the manifestation of the sons of God, to wit, the redemption of our bodies. Oh, God, hasten the day when I am delivered from this body of flesh! With it's desires and it's motion, and I have my glorified body! Oh, yes, Lord! How wonderful that will be! But in the meantime, He will set us free from that power of the sin principle in us. And there is victory for you tonight! There is no need for any of us to be continuing in the same pattern of sin. The moment that you recognize that you can't do anything about it and you turn it over, completely and fully, to Jesus Christ. In that moment you will discover His power and His victory. And then he'll show you another area that needs cleaning up. But we are progressing. I'm not yet what I am going to be. But thank God, I'm not what I was! I'm on the way. Do this and live, the law demands. But it gives me neither feet nor hands. I'm helpless. It only tells me what to do, but it doesn't give me the capacity to do it. A better work the gospel brings. It bids me to fly and then it gives me wings. The power of the gospel! The ability to do what we are commanded to do.

Going back to that man in the synagogue with the withered hand. After Jesus looked on the Pharisees with anger because they would hold this man back from the work of God because it violated their interpretation of the law, He just said to the man, "Stretch forth your hand." And immediately we read, that he stretched forth his hand and it was whole as the other. Now when Jesus said, stretch forth your hand, He was giving to the man an impossible command. The hand was withered. And for Jesus to say, stretch forth your hand. That's impossible! It was an impossible command. Now the man could have pleaded the impossibility. He could have said, Lord, I had a stroke. And boy, since this stroke, I just haven't been able to move it, Lord. You know, I have tried. You know, many times, but the nerves are just cut off or whatever, Lord. And I just can't move it, you know. And he could have argued with the command. He could have just given to Jesus all the reasons why he couldn't. But instead when Jesus said stretch forth your hand, he willed to obey the command! The brain gave the message once more to that withered hand that hadn't responded to the brain for so many years. And when he willed to obey

the command of Jesus, he found that immediately, Jesus gave to him all of the power that was necessary to obey. Now the Lord speaks to us about the blinded areas of our lives, the withered areas of our life. And he says, now be free. And what do we do? Usually we argue. Oh Lord, you don't know how I love to be free. Oh, Lord, I've tried so hard! Oh, man, Lord! You know, and we are arguing. We are telling Him why we can't. That's impossible, Lord! I've tried. But if we will, will to obey, the command of Jesus, we will discover that in our will to obey, everything necessary to obey, will be given to us at that moment. Jesus is dealing with areas in your life tonight. As we have been speaking, the Holy Spirit has been pointing out in your life, that area that the Lord wants to clean up. That area where the Lord wants to set you free. Where He wants to deliver you. That blighted area that He wants to change. And He is speaking to you tonight about that. Now, you can do two things. You can go out and try and do it. You can say, Lord, I'll do that. And you will go on a little longer in your struggle. Or you can say, Oh, Lord, wretched man that I am. I can't! But with your strength, I will! And you'll discover that He just gives you the power to have victory. And then to God be the glory for the things that He had done! To Him be praise and glory and honor, forever and ever. For God has wrought for me what I could not do for myself. A life of victory in Christ.

Thank You Father, for the power and the help that You give to those that are weak and struggling. For those who have no strength. You increase the strength. Lord, we thank You for the work that You have done in our lives. The progress that has been made. Lord, as we look back, we can see so many areas where You have come through and given us the victory. Helped us, Lord, and in our weakness You showed Your strength and Your power. Lord, continue Your work. And we thank You for the work of Your Spirit that reveals to us the things that You want changed and then gives us the capacity and the ability to be what You would have us to be. Continue that work in us tonight, Lord. Some that are here, who have been dealt with by Your Spirit, may they go home tonight, free from that besetting sin, by the power of Your Holy Spirit. As they have come to the realization, the confession, the acknowledgment that they couldn't do it, but have reached out tonight to touch the hem of Your garment and have been made whole. Oh, thank You Lord, for the power available, the exceeding greatness of the power available to us who believe. May we enter into that place of victory in our risen Savior! In Jesus' name. Amen.