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## **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

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## **Table of Contents**

Introduction.....	- 1 -
The Believer's Bond with Christ.....	- 2 -
The Believers Battle with Sin.....	- 5 -

## **Introduction**

Well, in October of 2017, the US Supreme Court agreed with a lower court ruling that ordered the city of Bloomfield, New Mexico to remove a 10 commandments monument from the City Hall lawn. Why did they want that monument removed? Because people were offended by the 10 commandments. And why would people be offended by the 10 commandments? Because the law exposes their sin, right? That's what the law does. It exposes our sin, every time a sinner would look and see that monument of the law, it reminded them of their sin, because they were guilty of breaking it.

Every one of us is guilty of breaking the law. The law was at work in their hearts and screaming out to them, you are a sinner. People don't like to hear that. So, they wanted it removed. They saw the law as being a bad thing in their life. And so, they said, let's just get rid of it. Get rid of the law. But here's the thing. It's not the law, it's not that monument, that is the problem. The problem is their heart. That's the problem. By removing the monument from the lawn... that didn't solve any of their issues, it solved nothing. Because the law wasn't the problem.

Those people are still going to have a problem in their life, even though the 10 commandments are taken down from that lawn, because the only way to solve their problems is by changing their position to the law. Not removing the law but changing their position or their relationship to the law.

And now for Jews, this would have been unheard of...remove the law? Why would you ever want to remove the law? Because to Jews the law was everything. To them, the law was a means to salvation. A means to be saved. If you just uphold the law, then you'll be saved. So, the Jews, the Jews saw the law as a really good thing, because they saw it as the only way to be saved. So how do we view the law then? Is the law bad? Is it a bad thing? Or is the law good? And if it's good, then what is our relationship to the law?

Well, Paul's going to answer that for us here in Romans chapter 7 tonight. What we're going to do is we're going to break this passage down into two parts.

- 1. First, our first part will call The Believers Bond with Christ.
- 2. And second will see the Believers Battle with Sin.
  - The Believers Bond with Christ and the Believers Battle with Sin.

### **The Believer's Bond with Christ**

So, let's look at our first point here, the Believers Bond with Christ. Now back in chapter 6 in verse 14, Paul has told us as believers that we are not under law, but when we're under what? Grace, we are under grace. And so, for a Jew, this would be a jab at their whole religious system. Because for them, both salvation and their whole religion was based upon the law. But Paul is fighting against that, as he's already told us back in chapter 5 that we are justified by faith alone, not by the law, but we are justified by faith.

And he's told us that the law was added to increase sin, where sin increased what also increased? Grace, God's grace increased. And so, we asked the question in chapter 6:1, then should we break the law and sin more so that grace may abound? And what was his answer? **May it never be!** He asked another question relating to the law in our chapter here tonight in verse 7. Look what he says in verse 7. He says, "**What shall we say then? Is the law sin?**" That is, is the law bad? Is the law a bad thing? And he answers what? **May it never be!**

No, the law is not bad. Paul is saying here the law is good, but we have to understand the purpose of the law. What Paul is going to show us is that the law does not save us, and neither does the law sanctify us. Now notice in verse 1, who Paul is writing to. Notice what he says there, "**or do you not know, brethren?**" (Rom 7:1) He's writing to the brethren. Who is that? Believers, fellow believers. And so in what Paul writes here in chapter 7, he is not speaking of the unbeliever, or speaking to unbelievers, but he is speaking of the believer. And it's important to know as we work our way through chapter 7 here, this is referring to believers.

What's his first question in verse 1? He says, "**Don't you know that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?**" Paul here is making a statement with this question, as he often does, right? He asked questions to make a statement to give some kind of truth. And he says this, he's making this statement with this question, because these people know this truth. They understand this, they know. Now, the law that he's referring to here is not specifically the law of Moses, that's not specifically what he's referring to, although the law of Moses could be included in this law in verse 1 here. But Paul is speaking about laws in general.

And we all know that as long as we are alive, we are bound by laws, every one of us, we're going to have laws on our drive home, that we have to abide by. Because we are alive, right? As long as we're alive, we are bound by laws, and that law has authority over us. But your great grandfather who is dead is not under the law anymore. He might be able to vote...but he can't break the law.

As one commentator says, "When life ceases, law ceases to hold sway." When life ceases, law ceases to hold sway. And Paul then goes on to give an illustration of this for us in verses 2 & 3, and he gives the illustration of marriage. And he says that when a woman is married to her husband, she is bound by law to her husband, that is her relationship, she is bound to that one man. And if she's found with another man than under the law, she is an adulteress. But when her husband dies, she is free to remarry. When she does, she is free from the law that bound her to her first husband. And now she is free to remarry and be joined to another man.

What is Paul's whole point in giving us that illustration? Well, he tells us in verse 4, look what he says in verse 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 is raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." (Rom 7:4)

What's Paul's whole point here? He's saying, you have a new relationship. You have a new relationship. When you are in Christ as a born again, believer, the law has already done its work. It accomplished its work. And what was it supposed to do? To show us our sin, so that we'll do what? Run to Christ. That's the purpose of the law. It shows us that we are sinners, just like a widow is no longer bound to her former husband but is free to remarry. So too are Christians in relationship to the law, we are not bound to the law anymore. But we are free from the law to be remarried in a spiritual sense.

As MacArthur says, "Believers are no longer married to the law, but are now married to Jesus Christ, the divine Bridegroom of His church." That's the union that we have now. We have a union with Christ. And what's the whole purpose of this union of being joined with Christ? We're no longer married to the law, bound to the law, we are now bound to Christ. What's the whole purpose of all of that? What does he say there at the end of verse 4? "To bear fruit for God." (Rom 7:4) To bear fruit for God. We are now able to produce spiritual fruit in our lives.

Remember, Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." But then Paul goes on in verse 10, and he says this, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works," We are created for good works, "which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." We are now bound to Christ so that we might produce fruit so that we would do good works. We're not saved by our good works, we are saved, to then do good works. That's what we're called to do as believers. We do these good works in our life, all for the glory of God.

In verse 5, Paul reminds us of our lives before we were believers, look what he says there "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." (Rom 7:5) Paul gives us four characteristics here, of us before we were believers.

1. First he says, "we were in the flesh", that is, we were unredeemed sinners, with a moral bent always toward evil. That's who we were.
2. Second, he says, we had "sinful passions." We had sinful passions, that is in the flesh, we had thoughts and impulses that were always sinful. That's who we were.

3. Third, he says those sinful passions "[were aroused by the law.](#)" That is the law said 'don't do it.' And your flesh said, what? 'But I want to, I want to do that.' The law comes in and says, No, don't. And you say, Yes, I want to. The law says 70 miles an hour, and you say, no, 80, right? That's what our flesh does.
4. Fourth, those sinful passions "[were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.](#)" That is, we gave into those sinful passions, and the only fruit that we ever produced was death. That's all that it was, we never did anything spiritually fruitful, or pleasing to God, as an unbeliever because unbelievers cannot please God. They cannot do that. All of our works are like filthy rags before God.

Martin Luther said, "The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man is that somehow he can make himself good enough to deserve to live forever, with an all-holy God." We can't, it's impossible for unbelievers to please God, and therefore to live with an all-holy God forever. But look at what Paul says in verse 6. There's those [two words again. "But now," But now. Circle those, highlight that in your Bible, underline it, "but now", "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."](#) (Rom 7:6) We have been released from the law, because we have died to it. At the moment of our salvation, we were released from the law, and released from the curse and the condemnation of the law, which is what we're going to get into in Romans chapter 8...that glorious news there. We have been released from the law as believers. At the moment of our salvation, though, that was the moment of our marriage, or our union with Christ, and we are now bound to Him.

And what's the result of this new union with Christ? Not just that we're able to obey God, obey God, but he says that we will obey the Lord. We're not just able to, but we desire to. We will obey Christ. As we depend on the Holy Spirit, we will produce spiritual fruit in our lives. But we must realize that this fruit is not done on our own. It's not done on our own. It's not done by the oldness of the letter of the law, as Paul says there in verse 6. That is, we aren't legalists who are trying to earn our standing or right relationship with God. But we are now able to obey God and we willingly desire to obey God because of the Spirit who lives inside of us. So, we serve in newness of the Spirit.

But a Jew might look at that and say, well, then you're saying that the law is useless and bad, right, Paul? Isn't that what you're saying? You're dead to the law. The law must be useless and bad. So, Paul answers in verse 7, "[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."](#) (Rom 7:7)

Now, did Paul covet before he read the law that said, you shall not covet? Of course, he did. Right? He's a sinner. Yes, he coveted. But the law simply pointed it out to him, and the law condemned him then as a sinner. Now, in verse 8 it sounds like Paul is making an excuse for himself, as if his sin, make an excuse for himself and his sin and showing responsibility or shoving responsibility elsewhere. Look at what he says in verse 8. "[But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the law sin is dead.](#)" (Rom 7:8)

It seems like Paul is passing the buck here. Look, it's sin in me that's doing it, right? It's not really me, but it's the sin in me. But that's not what Paul's doing here. Paul is taking personal responsibility here. And he's showing that as soon as he heard the commandment, "You shall not covet", all of a sudden, there was this desire within him to covet. And his point is that the law is not responsible for his sin, but he is responsible for it. It's not the law's fault, that he sinned, it's his own fault. It's not the law's fault that you and I sin, it's our fault. The law just told them to don't do it. But his sin nature said, I want to, I want to do it. Again, he's pointing out the truth of verse 7, that the law is not bad, the law is good. The law is really good. The law's not bad, sinners are bad. The law just points out the fact that you and I are sinners. That's the whole purpose of the law. And yes, "for apart from the law, sin is dead." But Paul's whole point here is that the law has come and it's good. And it has condemned us, and therefore it makes sin alive in us. All of a sudden sin comes alive when you realize there's the law standing in front of you, you go, 'oh boy, I am a sinner...sin is alive in me.' Which is what he says in verses 9-11.

Notice that phrase in verse 9, "[I was once alive apart from the law.](#)" (Rom 7:9) What does he mean by this? He's talking about his days as a Pharisee, as a legalist, when he thought that salvation and pleasing God was by upholding the law. That's how Paul used to think... he thought like a Pharisee, and he thought, 'I could just uphold the law, if I do everything that the law tells me to do, and add all of these commandments to it, and I do all of this stuff, well then that'll be pleasing to God, and I'll get into heaven.' That's how you get in.

So he's talking about his days as a Pharisee here, he thought himself to be blameless. And he considered himself then to be alive. But once his eyes were opened, to really understand the law and the purpose of the law, what happened to him? He died. He died. He realized that he was a sinner in big trouble. Because all of a sudden, he realized, 'Oh, no, the law is not there to keep it so that I can earn salvation. The law is there to condemn me as a sinner.' And so, what happens? I thought I was alive. But now I realize and recognize, I'm dead. I'm a dead sinner. And he realized he's in big trouble.

But it wasn't the law's fault that he was in trouble. It was his fault. the law was good in revealing that to him, right? the law did its job. the law did a good thing. Which is what he says in verse 12. Look at what he says there. "[So then the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.](#)" (Rom 7:12) He says, It is a really good thing, the law is great. Why? The law drives us to Christ. It drives us to Christ so that we will have a new union with Christ, not bound by the law anymore but bound to Christ, so that we might then live for Christ.

### **The Believers Battle with Sin.**

But Paul recognizes that there's a struggle with the law, and with sin, within the believer. Paul realizes and recognizes there's a struggle with sin as believers, which leads to our second point. And what he's going to talk about in the rest of this chapter, the believers battle with sin. the law did its job, drove him to Christ, but he says, there's still this battle with sin in me. Look at what he says in verse 13, "[Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be!](#)" (Rom 7:13)

Again, Paul asked the question, was it the law that killed me? Was the law the reason for my spiritual death? May it never be! No, it wasn't. What was it? His sin, right? It was his own sin. His sin, sin leads to death, the wages of sin is what? Death.

The cause of Paul's spiritual death was sin. But now that he's a believer, although he is dead to the law, he is not under the law, but under grace. And yet at the same time, he knows that there is a struggle with sin in his life. There's this battle that's going on.

Let me just say before we jump into this section here, this is not speaking of the carnal Christian. This is not speaking of some fleshly Christian or even a Christian who is new to the faith...a newly born-again believer. This passage right here is speaking of a mature believer, a mature believer who has grown in sanctification. In fact, what Paul is doing here, in the rest of this chapter here, is Paul is speaking about himself. He's speaking about Himself, who is one of the most sanctified believers to walk the face of the earth. Notice how many times Paul says 'I' or 'me' or 'my' in there... 37 times. He says that in 12 verses... this here is Paul's struggle with sin. This is a battle that every mature believer has.

Why do I say 'mature'? Because it's the mature believer who recognizes the sin in their life and hates it. That mature believer says, 'I realize and recognize there is still sin within me and I don't like this.' MacArthur says: "Paul here is describing the most spiritual mature of Christians, who, the more they honestly measure themselves against God's standards of righteousness, the more they realize how much they fall short." The level of spiritual insight, brokenness, contrition, and humility that characterize the person depicted in Romans 7, are marks of a spiritual and mature believer, who before God does not trust in his own goodness and achievements.

So what does Paul have to say about this mature believer? Look what he says in verse 14, "[For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of flesh sold into bondage to sin.](#)" (Rom 7:14) Now, Paul, I thought that you just said that we were in bondage to Christ. What's this all about here, Paul? Didn't he just say that we're 'no longer slaves of sin' back in chapter 6? We read that last week. Chapter 6:17. So what does he mean by saying, I am a flesh sold into bondage to sin? Well, notice that Paul says, "[I am of flesh](#)", not "I am in the flesh." He says I am of flesh.

Back in verse 5 he said, I am "[in the flesh](#)" (Rom 7:5), speaking of the state before he was a believer, or the state of us before we were believers. What Paul means here, is that he is still stuck in this mortal body. We're still stuck in the flesh. One commentator says, "The idea is that, although believers are not still in the flesh, the flesh is still in them."

If you remember from last week, we talked about our new nature that we have in Christ. Our inner man is new, and our inner man desires obedience to God. But this unredeemed flesh that we have still has sinful desires. And every mature believer knows this. This is why John says in [1 John 1:8](#) "[If we say that we have no sin, we're deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.](#)"

Why is that? Why does our flesh still have sinful desires? Because it's sold into bondage to sin. While the inner man is a new creation, the inner man is a new creation, the outer flesh still has sinful desires that we battle. That's how powerful sin is. Do you recognize and realize how powerful sin is? And the



mature believer recognizes this, and battles against this sin, while at the same time desiring to live in obedience to Christ.

How do we know? Well, Paul gives us a personal example. Look what he says in verse 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." (Rom 7:15) There's the battle, there's the struggle. That's the battle of every mature believer. There's a struggle, and there's a battle that's going on. If you don't have a battle in your life, you need to check your heart and see whether you are in the faith.

If there is no battle that's going on in your heart, and no desire to be obedient to Christ, then you need to repent of your sin and come to Christ tonight. Every believer should have this does have this struggle, this battle that goes on. Why does he do it? Verses 16 and 17. "But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the law, confessing that the law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." (Rom 7:16-17)

Paul says in verse 17, "no longer am I the one doing it." That is his new inner self, but it is the sinful flesh that is doing this. Now, does this mean that Paul is not responsible for it? Of course not. Paul is responsible. That's why it says in 1 John 1:9 -- It says "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:9) We must confess our sins, we are responsible and still have to confess our sins to God. But our inner man does not approve of the sin that you and I commit as believers. And that's Paul's whole point in verse 17. It's a battle. It's a battle.

Sin which dwells in him, until glorification, is still working. But his inner redeemed man, his inner redeemed self hates it. That's the Christian life. Inside of us, we hate it. And he reiterates it in verses 18 through 20. "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." (Rom 7:18) Again, Paul says nothing good dwells in his flesh -- in his unredeemed humanness -- that is still subject to sin. His "willing" is present --that is, he desires to be obedient -- because his inner self is redeemed. But that unredeemed flesh that he has is still a part of him, and he has to battle that.

Now, let me just be clear, there are some people who teach that this battle is with the new nature and the old nature. But remember, we talked last week about our old nature and what did we say about the old nature? It's what? Dead. Dead. Our old nature is dead and we're now called to walk in the newness of life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." The old nature is dead. It's done away with. And so, the battle that we have as believers is not with the old nature, but with the unredeemed flesh, this flesh that is not glorified yet.

That's why Paul says in chapter 6 in verse 13, "and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." (Rom 6:13) Our flesh still has sinful desires. But because we have the Holy Spirit living within us, as redeemed Christians, we must desire the things of the Spirit. And we are able to obey the things of the Spirit, right? We are able to walk now in the Spirit, because we have the Holy Spirit living within us.

Whereas an unbeliever is not even able to do that. The unbeliever can't, they're in their old nature. Their old nature is still alive, and they're walking after sin, and all they do is sin and sin and sin and sin, death and death and death and death. That's all they produce. But us as believers have the Holy Spirit living within us. We are to walk in the Spirit, and not fulfill the desires of the flesh, but walk in the Spirit. Which is why Paul says in [Romans 8:13](#) (we'll get to in a couple weeks,) "[For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.](#)"

So we have one new nature, but we battle this unredeemed flesh, and we have to put to death the deeds of the body. Which is again what Paul talks about verses 21 through 23. In 22 he says, that "[he joyfully concurs with the law of God in the inner man.](#)" ([Rom 7:22](#)) How? How is he joyful in the inner man? Because that's His redeemed inner man. It's redeemed, right? So he rejoices, he's got joy in the inner man. But here comes the battle in verse 23. "[But I see a different law in the members of my body.](#)" ([Rom 7:23](#))

And what's the result? It's a war, a war that goes on between the unredeemed flesh and the redeemed inner man. That's why Paul screams out in verse 24, "[wretched man that I am.](#)" ([Rom 7:24](#)) I'm a wretched man. Now, why would Paul conclude this about himself?

Here's why Paul concludes this about himself. Because Paul knows of the holiness of God. He knows of the holiness of God. That is Paul has a high view of God, and a low view of man. And he says, Oh, I am a wretched man. You see, as you come to know, the holiness of God, the more you will recognize how sinful your flesh really is. But you've got to have a high view of God. Your view of God needs to grow bigger. And that happens through His Word as we come to know who God is through His Word. And that's a sign of sanctification of a mature believer, a believer who's growing and becoming more mature.

And then Paul asks, "[Who will set me free from the body of this death?](#)" ([Rom 7:24](#)) Notice what's causing the frustration of Paul, the body of this death? That's frustrating for him? Who can save me from this? He says, who can set me free from this body? Paul knows the answer. Look what he says in verse 25. "[Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.](#)" ([Rom 7:25](#)) Paul knows that the law can't set him free. The law can't set him free, the more rules and regulations in his life will not set him free. Only Christ can set him free.

Remember, the purpose of the law was to drive us to Christ. Galatians 3:24 says, "[Therefore the law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ so that we may be justified by faith.](#)" ([Gal 3:24](#)) That's the whole purpose of the law, drive you to Christ, drive you to Christ, drive you to Christ. And that's why Paul then concludes, only Christ can set you free -- and that's why you and I must remain dependent upon Christ. We have to be dependent upon Christ, we must walk in the Spirit so that we don't fulfill the desires of the flesh -- Galatians 5:16 tells us.

Because Paul knows that this battle is going to continue to go on through the entire life of a sanctified believer. The battle is there, it is going to go on, which is why he concludes in verse 25. "[So then on the](#)



one hand, I myself with my mind, I'm serving the law of God, but on the other hand, with my flesh the law of sin." (Rom 7:25) It's a battle. It's a battle.

But we can't win the battle by the law. That's what legalists do. They just add more and more laws and try and obey more and more laws. And they think I'm becoming more sanctified, because look at all the things that I'm doing, I'm doing more and more and more and more. But that's not the purpose of the law. The purpose of the law is to drive us to Christ, so we're dependent upon Christ. And then we have a desire to be obedient to Him. Our heart is changed. We're in union now with Christ and we go, 'all I want to do is be obedient to Him.'

The law can't save us. And the law can't sanctify us. We're bound now to Christ, and we need to live like it in our lives. And as we continue in this battle, we win the battle not by our own strength, not by us mustering up our own strength. But we win it as we continue to depend upon Christ, as we walk according to the Spirit that He has given to us. May we be fully dependent upon Christ and upon His Spirit, and not fulfill the desires of the flesh, but walk according to the Spirit.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this passage that we have read. Lord, You know the battle, You know everything that we go through. Lord, we thank You that we have victory in Christ, that the battle is won not on our own, or with our own strength, but as we depend fully upon You. Lord, help us to do that, to live that way, this week. Lord as we leave from this place here tonight, help us to grow in our dependency upon Christ, and see what the law has done in our lives. And it's already done its work. It drove us to Christ. And now we depend upon You and we desire to obey You. May that be our heart, our hearts desire to depend upon You and to live in full obedience to You. For Your glory alone, we pray in Christ's name, Amen.