



### **Romans 7:1-6 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup> For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. <sup>3</sup> Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

<sup>4</sup> Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

### **Romans 7:1-6 (HCSB)**

<sup>1</sup> Since I am speaking to those who understand law, brothers, are you unaware that the law has authority over someone as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup> For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law regarding the husband. <sup>3</sup> So then, if she gives herself to another man while her husband is living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. Then, if she gives herself to another man, she is not an adulteress.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, my brothers, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the [crucified] body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—that we may bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions operated through the law in every part of us and bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

## English Standard Version Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

### *Romans 7:1-6*

**7:1-6** *The Triumph of Grace over the Power of the Law.* The law does not and cannot bring victory over sin and death since sin is defined and even promoted through the law. But those who have died with Christ are set free from sin and the law.

**7:1-3** As in this entire chapter, **law** refers to the Mosaic law given at Mount Sinai. **Those who know the law** includes both Jews and Gentiles who are familiar with the OT. [Verse 1](#) introduces the principle, worked out in the following verses, that the law is in force only while a person is alive. In [vv. 2-3](#), Paul applies the principle to marriage. A married woman who lives with another man is subject to the law regarding adultery only if her husband is still living.

**7:4** The principle and illustration from [vv. 1-3](#) are applied to the readers in [vv. 4-6](#). Whereas the *husband* dies in the illustration of [vv. 2-3](#), here *believers* die to the law through the death of *Christ*; the analogy does not match perfectly, but the application is clear.

**7:5** **Flesh** here stands for the old “Adam”—the unregenerate former life of those who now believe. The law, contrary to the view of contemporary Judaism (cf. note on [5:20](#)), did not bring life. Instead it stimulated sin and led to death. Although sin leads to **death** (cf. [6:23](#)), in Christ there is life ([John 14:6](#); [1 John 5:12](#); cf. [Prov. 1:19](#)).

**7:6** **But now** represents the new era of redemptive history. Christians are free from the Mosaic law and now enjoy new life in the Spirit.

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>2</sup>

### *Romans 7:1-6*

**7:1-6** Roman Christians knew about Roman civil law, and many of them (especially those of a Jewish or proselyte background) knew the Mosaic law. Of course neither law could hold sway over a dead person. Having died with Christ, the believer is not under Mosaic law ([6:14](#)).

**7:2-3** **A married woman**, bound by law to her **husband** so long as he lived, was legally free to marry another man if her husband died.

**7:4-5** Believers have died to the "old self" ([6:2-6](#)) and are free to marry another and **bear fruit for God**. The death of Messiah is the means by which we died to the Mosaic law ([Gal 3:13-14](#); [Col 2:14](#)).

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1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 7".

2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 6".

## sarx

Greek Pronunciation	[SAHRX]
HCSB Translation	flesh
Uses in Romans	26
Uses in the NT	147
Focus passage	<a href="#">Romans 7:5</a>

The Greek noun *sarx* literally means *flesh*, but it is used figuratively in several different ways. The term normally carries a negative sense, especially in Paul's writings. Jesus sometimes used *sarx* to describe the fallen, sinful aspect of a person ([Mt 26:41](#)=[Mk 14:38](#); [Jn 6:63](#)), and Paul developed this even more in his writings. Paul used *sarx* to emphasize the ineffectiveness of human effort in spiritual matters ([Rm 2:28](#); [6:19](#); [8:3](#)). This is particularly the case in Romans and Galatians where the term has a dual connotation: (1) indwelling sin ([Rm 7:5](#); [8:3](#); [13:14](#); [Gal 5:24](#)) and (2) the desire for a law-based relationship with God ([Rm 7:18](#); [Gal 3:3](#); [6:12-13](#)). Indwelling sin makes a relationship with God based on obedience to the law impossible since no one can meet the law's demands ([Rm 3:19-21](#); [7:25](#); [8:4](#); [Gal 6:23](#); see [Jms 2:10](#)).

**7:6** As new creations, believers serve as slaves (Gk *douleuein*) in a **new way** with a new power from the Spirit, not as old men ([6:6](#)) laboring vainly under the **letter of the law**.

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### *Romans 7:1-6*

**7:1ff** Paul shows that the law is powerless to save the sinner ([7:7-14](#)), the lawkeeper ([7:15-22](#)), and even the person with a new nature ([7:23-25](#)). The sinner is condemned by the law; the lawkeeper can't live up to it; and the person with the new nature finds his or her obedience to the law sabotaged by the effects of the old nature. Once again Paul declares that salvation cannot be found by obeying the law. No matter who we are, only Jesus Christ can set us free.

**7:2-6** Paul uses marriage to illustrate our relationship to the law. When a spouse dies, the law of marriage no longer applies. Because we have died with Christ, the law can no longer condemn us. Since we are united with Christ, his Spirit enables us to produce good deeds for God. We now serve God, not by obeying a set of rules, but out of renewed hearts and minds that overflow with love for him.

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3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1905-1906.

[7:4](#) When a person dies to the old life and accepts Christ as Savior, a new life begins. An unbeliever's life is centered on his or her own personal gratification. Those who don't follow Christ have only their own self-determination as their source of power. By contrast, God is at the center of a Christian's life. God supplies the power for a Christian's daily living. Believers find that their whole way of looking at the world changes when they come to Christ.

[7:6](#) Some people try to earn their way to God by keeping a set of rules (obeying the Ten Commandments, attending church faithfully, or doing good deeds), but all they earn for their efforts is frustration and discouragement. However, because of Christ's sacrifice, the way to God is already open, and we can become his children simply by putting our faith in him. No longer trying to reach God by keeping rules, we can become more and more like Jesus as we live for him day by day. Let the Holy Spirit turn your eyes away from your own performance and toward Jesus. He will free you to serve him out of love and gratitude. This is "living in the Spirit."

[7:6](#) Keeping the rules, laws, and customs of Christianity doesn't save us. Even if we could keep our actions pure, we would still be doomed because our hearts and minds are perverse and rebellious. Like Paul, we can find no relief in the synagogue or church until we look to Jesus Christ himself for our salvation—which he gives us freely. When we do come to Jesus, we are flooded with relief and gratitude. Will we keep the rules any better? Most likely, but we will be motivated by love and gratitude, not by the desire to get God's approval. We will not be merely submitting to an external code, but we will willingly and lovingly seek to do God's will.

## Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary<sup>4</sup>

### *Romans 7:1-6*

#### *No Longer Bound to the Law / [7:1-6](#)*

In [chapter 6](#), Paul explained how Christ delivered us from sin: when he died, we also “died” to sin. But while we are alive in our bodies, we must continue to deal with our sin nature and its attempts to control our thoughts and actions. To describe this tension between our old and new natures, Paul used the analogy of slavery to sin versus slavery to God. He begins [chapter 7](#) by arguing the same point, using the analogy of marriage: Just as death breaks the marital vow, so death with Christ breaks our “marriage” to sin. We were bound to sin because we failed to keep the law. The problem is not with the law; it is within us.

[7:1](#) Obviously, the **law** can only apply **to a person who is still living**—a dead body cannot be expected to follow any laws, nor can it make restitution for sins committed. Paul's rhetorical question creates a chilling afterthought. Death brings an end to the authority of the law, but what remains is judgment. Death removes a person from the frying pan of the law, but then drops him or her into the fire of judgment. But if a person can get out from under the authority of the law without coming under the judgment of law, that would be good news!

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4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 602-603.

**7:2-3** The **marriage** vows bind a woman to her husband while he lives. **If he dies**, however, she is free from her vows to him. However, if a wife leaves her **husband** for another man, she is **committing adultery**. If this woman is widowed, **she is free from that law** to marry another man and **does not commit adultery**.

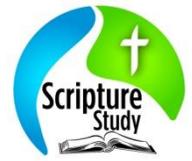
Again, Paul was developing an analogy from common living to emphasize his lesson. Having begun the theme of marriage, Paul wants his readers to remember that under normal circumstances any breaking of the marriage vows would be adultery. Having stated that fact, Paul explains its significance.

**7:4** Just as death breaks the bond between a husband and wife, so a believer's "death" (death to his old self) breaks the **power** of the **law**. The old contractual arrangement had to be completely severed before the new one could begin. This had to be as final as death. Jewish believers could not live with a dual allegiance. They could not be under the lordship of Christ and the lordship of the law. Total commitment to Christ cannot coexist with a total commitment to the law. That would be spiritual adultery. A believer belongs fully to Christ. This happens because of Christ's death on the cross and the believer's being **united with** him in his death and resurrection. The result is **good fruit**. Only by belonging to Christ can we do **good deeds** and live a life pleasing to God. This is how we serve in the new way of the Spirit (**7:6**). (See also [Galatians 5:22-23](#); [Philippians 1:11](#).)

**7:5** Paul reminds his readers that the law did little more for them than fuel their **evil desires**, referring to the human tendency to be dominated by desire and sin (see [8:7](#); [Galatians 3:3](#); [5:24](#)). They were **controlled by** their **old nature**. The only fruit produced by a life that is under the law are **sinful deeds** and **death**. The law restrains us and teaches us God's will, but it also reveals and stimulates our sinful nature. At the same time it identifies sin, it also generates sin.

**7:6** This statement anticipates the spiritual solution to the problems Paul will address in this chapter. Because **we have been released from the law**, we no longer have to serve **in the old way by obeying the letter of the law**. In other words, the law is not erased, but it is no longer to be obeyed on the superficial level of "works" (the way of obedience familiar to the Jews). Nor are we freed from all responsibility to serve. God still desires our moral obedience, but we are to serve Christ by focusing on his desires, not on a list of commands. We have been released so that we can serve **in the new way, by the Spirit** living within us, guiding us, and showing us how to please God. We are still called to serve, but our master is gracious, and we are no longer trapped by the cycle of effort, failure, and guilt.

## Study and Discussion Questions



### An Illustration From Marriage - [Romans 7:1-6](#)

#### Open It

1. What were some of the basic rules of behavior you were taught as a child?
2. \*How do your present values differ from the ones you were taught as a child?

#### Explore It

3. What illustration did Paul use to explain a Christian's relationship to the written law? ([7:1-3](#))
4. Whom does the husband represent in Paul's illustration? ([7:2-3](#))
5. Whom does the married woman represent in Paul's illustration? ([7:2-3](#))
6. \*To what did Paul compare the death of a woman's husband? ([7:2-5](#)) Why?
7. What is the purpose or goal of a Christian's new life? ([7:4](#))
8. \*What are the primary differences between the old life under the Law and the new life in the way of the Spirit? ([7:4-6](#))
9. What controls a person before he or she becomes a Christian? ([7:5](#))
10. \*How is a person released from being bound by the Law? ([7:6](#))

#### Get It

11. What role should God's written law play in a Christian's life?
12. What keeps a Christian from sinning if the penalties of the Law have been forgiven by God?
13. \*What does it mean to be a new person in Christ?
14. How can the Spirit help us please God in a way that following the Law couldn't?
15. How do a person's attitudes and outlook on life change when he or she comes to Christ?
16. How can knowing that God loves you unconditionally change your behavior?
17. \*What is the difference between keeping religious laws and following the Spirit of Christ?

#### Apply It

18. \*What old ideas about pleasing God through religious activity do you need to discard this week?
19. What can you do this week to build your living relationship with Christ instead of merely following the rules?

