

Why does that matter to me? (5)

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience, they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall, all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

Below you will find Romans 7 with my notes in Italics. We did this as a running commentary as a necessary foundation before we begin doctrine #5. These notes will follow the #5 Video.

Romans 7 The Message (MSG)

7¹⁻³ You shouldn't have any trouble understanding this, friends, for you know all the ins and outs of the law—how it works and how its power touches only the living. For instance, a wife is legally tied to her husband [*as we shall see in this case the husband was very, very demanding and unforgiving. He was an oppressive husband*] **while he lives, but if he dies** [*and what a relief it will be when he does die!*], she's free. If she lives with another man while her husband is living [*she does not have much choice but to put up with him while he is alive*], she's obviously an adulteress. But if he dies, she is quite free to marry another man in good conscience, with no one's disapproval.

⁴⁻⁶ So, my friends, this is something like what has taken place with you. When Christ died he took that entire rule-dominated way of life [*that old husband*] down with him and left it in the tomb, leaving you free to “marry” a resurrection life and bear “offspring” of faith [*fruit of The Spirit*] for God. For as long as we lived that old way of life [*trying to please that oppressive husband*], doing whatever we felt we could get away with, [*our weakness to*] sin was calling most of the shots as the old law code [*with its long list of do's and don'ts that we could never even remember let alone keep*] hemmed us in. And this made us all the more rebellious [*because we thought to ourselves 'what's the use of trying when we fail so often and so repeatedly. Why even try when we see the pothole, yell, 'there's the pot hole' and with our eyes wide open step into it anyway!'*] In the end, all we had to show for it was miscarriages and stillbirths. But now that we're no longer shackled to that domineering mate [*that overbearing husband!*] of sin, and out from under all those oppressive regulations and fine print, we're free to live a new life in the freedom of God.

⁷ But I can hear you say, “If the law code was as bad as all that, it's no better than sin itself.” That's certainly not true. The law code had a perfectly legitimate function. Without its clear guidelines for right and wrong, moral behavior would be mostly guesswork. Apart from the succinct, surgical command, “You shall not covet,” I could have dressed covetousness up to look like a virtue and ruined my life with it. [*Everybody would say that the oppressive husband was bad. But no! That oppressive husband was simply trying to make me into the perfect person. To never fail. To never ever have an off day spiritually. To never ever, ever sin. He was trying to teach me how impossible it is to please God perfectly 24/7, 365 days of the year and 366 days in a leap year. He may have seemed oppressive, but he was just trying to get me to know that my job was to be perfect 100% of the time. C.S. Lewis said somewhere 'we never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it'*]

⁸⁻¹² Don't you remember how it was? I do, perfectly well. The law code started out as an excellent piece of work. What happened, though, was that sin found a way to pervert the command into a temptation, making a piece of “forbidden fruit” out of it [*I admit, the old oppressive husband got to be a bit more overbearing. But that is mostly my fault. He said 'Now don't be mad wife because I say it was your fault. The reason why you kept falling short is because your power to choose right over wrong was very weak. It was a bad match from the beginning.' You see, he was looking for 'a perfect wife' and I could not live up to his expectations – try as I might. I could get some of the big ones right some of the time – but there was never a day when he did not have the right to call me in and scold me because I missed #421, or subsection 32 of law 323.*] The law code [*the oppressive husband*], instead of being used to guide me, was used to [*goad me, remind me of my short comings, {ILLUSTRATION FLASHING SPEED SIGN} or if you like,*] **seduce me** [*into spiritual depression and a strong sense of futility*]. **Without all the paraphernalia of the law code** [*without the husbands' constant reminders {FLASHING SPEED SIGNS} of where I was falling short*], **sin looked pretty dull and lifeless** [*I thought sin had no part of me. I was just living my life, making some mistakes like everybody else. No worse or no better. I was not comparing*]

myself to my husbands' standards I was comparing myself to my neighbor.' So....], I went along kept on breaking the speed limit without paying much attention to it. But once [my weakness to] sin got its hands on the law code and decked itself out in all that finery [or once I understood the holy choices I was expected to be making every day], I was fooled, and fell for it [I was crushed by it]. The very command that was supposed to guide me into life was cleverly used to trip me up, throwing me headlong [I suddenly realized that I was defeated, I am defeated and it is no likely to change. I was devastated. I was married to a husband who would never see me as good enough – because I really was not good enough and I could not become good enough. Never! Never ever!.] So sin was plenty alive, and I was stone dead. But the law code itself is God's good and common sense, each command sane and holy counsel. [You get that? I am admitting that my overbearing, demanding husband was not wrong. I am not saying my husband was wrong. No he was just trying to make me a perfect. He was like the 'speed sign' and I was like a driver who simply could not stop speeding. Try as hard as I might, I couldn't stop speeding and around every corner – there was the flashing sign saying in effect – you are one big failure!]

¹⁷⁻²⁰ **But I need something more!** *[I am beginning to believe I was born missing something. I almost need to start over – but not just the way I was built before. I need a new start with new equipment. Like that is possible hey?] For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. [This is a dark day for me. Do I sound depressed, disillusioned and even defeated? Well it is true. I am in an impossible situation.]*

²¹⁻²³ **It happens so regularly that it's predictable.** *[No good to just give me a pep talk and say 'try harder'. I can't try harder than I have tried. I have really tried. I gave it everything I had in me. But therein lies the problem. I don't have 'it' – whatever that 'it' is - in me to succeed.] The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. [I think I am a helpless rebel right to the very core of my being! I am disgusted with myself.]*

²⁴ **I've tried everything and nothing helps.** *[I am so tired of the 'save yourself' self-help advice I have been getting. Try education? Try fame? Try riches? Try religion? – I have tried it all, and] I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? [I am going to put it on Facebook and just tell everybody I am done! I cannot ever measure up. One last time I am going to ask if anyone out there can help me. I am drowning in my own defeat and I am going under for the last time. So I ask one more time – is there anyone who can do anything for me?] Isn't that the real question? [Hang on – hang on. Someone is messaging me. I bet it is another one of these hair-brained schemes. But I'll open it and see]*

²⁵ **The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does.** He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different. *[What – my answer is Jesus Christ? How?]*

8 1-2 With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's 'being-here-for-us' no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. *[Can that ever be true? If that is true, I will shout about it for all eternity! I am sick of living under the dark cloud of sin and guilt – of trying and failing – of wondering how I will ever measure up.]* A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death. *[A new power "in me"? A new power living right in me is possible? Right in me???? Freeing me? How? How is that possible?]*

3-4 God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. *[That is powerful news. Powerful news! Can you put it another way. I am still struggling to get it.]*

(NIV) 8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, *[What? If I somehow get into Jesus Christ and Him into me – there is now no condemnation? I can be forgiven and released from the bondage of trying – of self effort?]*

