

Romans 7

Romans 7:1-6

- Structure:
 - 7:1 → law rules over a person as long as he lives
 - 7:2-3 → analogy from marriage
 - 7:4-6 → believers have died to the law through Christ

- What is the law *νόμος* here?
- Most likely Law of Moses.
- Cf. 7:7 – citation of the 10th commandment of the Decalogue
- Cf. 7:12

- In 7:1 – Paul declares that the Law “rules over a person” as long as he lives. *ὅτι ὁ νόμος κυριεύει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐφ’ ὅσον χρόνον ζῆ;*

- In 7:4 → note the parallel structure where Paul applies the marriage imagery to the believers:
- *ἡμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε ἀοριστὴν πασσίᾳ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου διὲν νόμου διὰ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*

- Note:
 - Died to the law: Why not through the death of Christ but through the body of Christ?
 - Result of being put to death and belonging to Christ: in order that we may bear fruit for God

- 7:5-6 – effects under the law:
 - Passion of sin – Cf. Jewish understanding of law
 - Law as bondage

Verbal connections between 6:1-23 and 7:1-6

Chapter 6	Chapter 7
If we have been united to <i>the likeness of his death</i> we will be also to that of his resurrection (6:5)	joined to <i>another man</i> (7:3) in order to be united to another, to him who was raised from the dead (7:4)
that the <i>body of sin</i> might be abolished (6:6)	released from the <i>law</i> of the husband (7:2) but now we have been freed from the <i>law</i> (7:6)
no longer to be slaves of <i>sin</i> (6:6)	we are slaves in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the <i>letter</i> (7:6)
<i>death</i> no longer is lord (6:9)	the <i>law</i> has lordship as long as you live (7:1)

Verbal connections between 6:1-23 and 7:1-6

Chapter 6	Chapter 7
the death he died he died <i>to sin</i> (6:10); consider yourselves dead <i>to sin</i> (6:11)	you were made to die <i>to the law</i> through the body of Christ (7:4)
<i>sin</i> is no longer lord over you (6:14)	the <i>law</i> has lordship as long as you live (7:1)
having been freed <i>from sin</i> (6:18) you were made free <i>for righteousness</i> (6:20) now having been freed <i>from sin</i> (6:22)	she is free <i>from the law</i> (7:3)
when you were slaves of <i>sin</i> ... what fruit did you have?...for the outcome of those is <i>death</i> ...but now that you are enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto holiness (6:21, 22)	to bear fruit to God (7:4) passions aroused <i>through the law</i> worked...to bear fruit to death (7:5)

- 7:7-25
- This section expands on 7:5 where Paul declares that sinful passion were stimulated by the law.

- Who then is the "I" in 7:7-25?
 1. Adam's experience with God's commandment in the Garden of Eden
 2. Israel's experience of receiving the law at Mount Sinai
 3. Rhetorical – the "I" referred to every person in general

4. Autobiographical – denoting Paul's experience
 - Does this refer to his pre-Christian days or his Christian experience?

- Argument for Christian experience:
 - the shift from aorist in 7:7-13 to present in 7:14-25 – the former indicates pre-Christian and the latter Christian experience.
 - if 7:14-25 refers to Christian experience, then it is fitting that it ends with a doxology

- there is duality to the “I” – one describes the ‘I’ as struggling with sin, and the ‘I’ that transcends the flesh
- 7:14-25 talks about desire (see 7:15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21) of the ‘I’ to keep God’s law.
- 7:14-25 also talks about Paul’s struggles – this fits into the schema of inaugurated eschatology

- Argument for pre-Christian experience
 - 7:7-25 is a further development of the theme set forth in 7:5 while 8:1-17 is a development of 7:6
 - the structure can be seen as follows (per Schreiner):
 - A Life under the law: Unregenerate experience (7:5)
 - B Life in the Spirit: Regenerate experience (7:6)
 - A’ Life under the law elaborated (7:7-25)
 - B’ Life in the Spirit elaborated (8:1-17)

- those who argue that the present tense describes the Christian experience fails to see that present tense can also function as providing vividness to the rhetorical argument
- the argument for the duality of ‘I’ is also unpersuasive
- Sharp contrast in 7:14-15 and 8:1-17 makes it difficult to argue for Christian experience in both cases

- Lack of mention of Holy Spirit in chapter 7 seems to suggest that it refers to pre-Christian experience
- if chapter 7 refers to pre-Christian, how can this person have a desire to keep God’s law?
- If chapter 7 refers to Christian experience, then the description of the Christian experience is bleak indeed

- What would most likely be Paul’s argument here?
- Cf. flow of argument:
 - 7:7-12 – Paul’s transgression and death upon encountering the commandment
 - 7:13-25 – the continuing state of bondage under sin.

- Paul's emphasis here is on the power of sin and law and the failure of the law to save

Fitzmyer's Spiritual Exercises

- Under whose standard do I align myself, under that of Satan or of the Lord, under that of sin or of Christ?
- How do I react to law myself?
- Do I treat it as a taskmaster that I must obey?
- Or do I allow the freedom that comes from Christ to enhance that facet of life?

- Do I lead my life, even under the restraints of various regulations with which I must reckon, as a life dedicated to God?
- Do I reckon with the possibility that the evil that I may do in violation of such regulations can actually be a violation of God's law?

- Does my attitude toward law entice me with forbidden fruit because I am still 'in the flesh' ?
- Do I not find in 7:7-13 a description of my own existential condition?
- How often have I sensed the temptation of 'forbidden fruit' ? Even within the past year?

- To what extent am I aware of sin dwelling within me and luring me with its enticements?
- What can I do in the future to improve this situation?