

## Romans 7:1-13 Summary

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Paul wished to help the Jewish Christians in Rome understand the way in which now, in Christ, they relate differently to the Old Testament law. In verses 1-3, he uses the analogy of how a married woman's relationship to her spouse changed upon the husband's death. She is no longer bound to her former husband by the law of marriage. In verse 4, Paul declares that "likewise," your relationship to the law has changed; in Christ, you have died to the law so that you may "serve, not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit."

Under the Old (Mosaic) Covenant, people were justified (and sanctified) by grace through faith and as God's people they were obligated to keep the commands of God and because they would fail to keep the commands perfectly, they must participate in the sacrificial system. But now that Christ has come, we have "died to the law through the body of Christ...who has been raised from the dead." Writing here of the life, substitutionary and sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul, as elsewhere, declares that Christ has fulfilled the law – Jesus' perfectly kept the commands (the law) of God and he was the perfect, once-for-all, sacrifice for the sins of his people. Now, because of what Jesus has done, God's people have been released from the obligation to perform the sacrifices of the Old Covenant and we are no longer obligated to the "old written code" but to Jesus "in the new life of the Spirit."

But lest you misunderstand and think the law was or is bad or sinful, Paul writes that the law had and has a crucial role to play; the law shows how sinful we are. In fact, apart from the law (a reflection of the character and will of God) we would not have known what sin was. And so sinful is sin that when the law appears, our sinfulness uses the law to create even more sin – "I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'you must not covet.'" Paul ends by saying "the law is holy, and the commandments are righteous and good." But the law shows how sinful sin truly is.

So, what is Christ-follower's relationship to the law? Clearly declared throughout the New Testament, we are no longer under the sacrificial laws

since they have been fulfilled in Christ. Equally clear is that we are no longer under the civil or ceremonial laws that were unique to national Israel. But what about the moral laws? We are no longer obligated to them in the static way of “the old written code,” but with a new dynamic, we are now Spirit-empowered to follow the word and example of our Lord. The moral law of God (a declaration of his character and will) is reiterated in the New Covenant with greater clarity and deeper understanding (think “you have heard it said, but I say unto you...”) But we now have the power of the Spirit to live out that will in the dynamic of a living relationship with the risen Jesus.