Dr. Alexander Whyte once said that whenever a new book on Romans comes out and is sent to him by its publisher for consideration, he at once turns to the comments on chapter VII, and according to the view taken of that important section he decides on the value of the entire work.
Dr. Griffith Thomas

ROMANS CHAPTER 7
Prayer Study #447
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Romans 7 - Amplified Bible (AMP)

7 Do you not know, brethren—for I am speaking to men who are acquainted with the Law—that legal claims have power over a person only for as long as he is alive?
2 *For [instance] a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is loosed and discharged from the law concerning her husband.*
3 *Accordingly, she will be held an adulteress if she unites herself to another man while her husband lives. But if her husband dies, the marriage law no longer is binding on her [she is free from that law]; and if she unites herself to another man, she is not an adulteress.*
4 *Likewise, my brethren, you have undergone death as to the Law through the [crucified] body of Christ, so that now you may belong to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.*
5 *When we were living in the flesh (mere physical lives), the sinful passions that were awakened and aroused up by [what] the Law [makes sin] were constantly operating in our natural powers (in our bodily organs, [in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh), so that we bore fruit for death.*
6 *But now we are discharged from the Law and have terminated all intercourse with it, having died to what once restrained and held us captive. So now we serve not under [obedience to] the old code of written regulations, but [under obedience to the promptings] of the Spirit in newness [of life].*

Paul is basing this passage on the legal principle that death cancels all contracts. As long as a woman's husband is alive, she is not free to marry another without committing adultery or polygamy, which is against the law. However, if the husband dies, she is free to marry another.

Before we accept Christ, we were married to sin, but sin was slain by Christ, and we are to reckon ourselves dead unto sin (Romans 6:11). Therefore, we are free to be "married" or the bride of Christ. Also, we were "married" to the law, but the law was killed by the work of Christ, and so again we are free to "marry" Christ.

Then suddenly Paul turns things around and says that in verse 6 that we are the ones who died to the law. We see this in baptism where we share in the death of Christ and go into a watery grave, rising up out of the water as alive in Christ. Therefore, we are free from the obligations of the law. In other words, as William Barclay puts it, "When that happens, Christian obedience becomes not an externally imposed obedience to some written code of laws but an inner allegiance to the spirit of Jesus Christ…. Before we knew Christ, we tried to rule life by obedience to the written code of the law. That was when we were *in the flesh*. By *the flesh*, Paul does not simply mean the body, because we retain a physical body to the end of the day. In all of us, there is something that responds to the seduction of sin; and it is that part which provides a means of entry for sin that Paul calls *the flesh.* When we rule our lives by union with Christ, we rule them not by obedience to a written code of law which may actually awaken the desire to sin but by an allegiance to Jesus Christ within our spirit and our hearts. The motive of our lives is not law but love; and the inspiration of love can make us able to do what the restraint of law was powerless to help us to do."

7 What then do we conclude? Is the Law identical with sin? Certainly not! Nevertheless, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have recognized sin or have known its meaning. [For instance] I would not have known about covetousness [would have had no consciousness of sin or sense of guilt] if the Law had not [repeatedly] said, You shall not covet and have an evil desire [for one thing and another].
***8** But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment [to express itself], got a hold on me and aroused and stimulated all kinds of forbidden desires (lust, covetousness). For without the Law sin is dead [the sense of it is inactive and a lifeless thing].*
***9** Once I was alive, but quite apart from and unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came, sin lived again, and I died (was sentenced by the Law to death).*
***10** And the very legal ordinance which was designed and intended to bring life actually proved [to mean to me] death.*
***11** For sin, seizing the opportunity and getting a hold on me [by taking its incentive] from the commandment, beguiled and entrapped and cheated me, and using it [as a weapon], killed me.*
***12** The Law therefore is holy, and [each] commandment is holy and just and good.*
***13** Did that which is good then prove fatal [bringing death] to me? Certainly not! It was sin, working death in me by using this good thing [as a weapon], in order that through the commandment sin might be shown up clearly to be sin, that the extreme malignity and immeasurable sinfulness of sin might plainly appear.*

Paul tells us that the law is holy and just and is the very voice of God. If people lived in perfect obedience to the law, they would be in perfect relationship with God and with other people. The law is meant to make us good.

Yet this same law is the thing that lets sin gain entry into a person. Without the law, sin would have no existence. And also, the law forbids certain actions, and human nature, since the fall of Adam, has always had a fascination with forbidden things. Thus, *sin* takes a beautiful and holy and just and good thing, *the law*, and twists it into something that serves the purposes of evil.

14 *We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am a creature of the flesh [carnal, unspiritual], having been sold into slavery under [the control of] sin.*
15 *For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns].*
16 *Now if I do [habitually] what is contrary to my desire, [that means that] I acknowledge and agree that the Law is good (morally excellent) and that I take sides with it.*
17 *However, it is no longer I who do the deed, but the sin [principle] which is at home in me and has possession of me.*
18 *For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. [I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.]*
19 *For I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am [ever] doing.*
20 *Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it [it is not myself that acts], but the sin [principle] which dwells within me [fixed and operating in my soul].*
21 *So I find it to be a law (rule of action of my being) that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands.*
22 *For I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [with my new nature].*
23 *But I discern in my bodily members [in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh] a different law (rule of action) at war against the law of my mind (my reason) and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs [in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh].*
24 *O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death?*
25 *O thank God! [He will!] through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) our Lord! So then indeed I, of myself with the mind and heart, serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Paul is being totally transparent in this passage. He is saying, what we all could say, that he knew what was right and wanted to do it. He knew what was wrong and did not want to do it. Yet somehow, he did. It was as if he had a split personality. The Jews believed that every person had two natures, a good impulse and a bad impulse. The bad

impulse was always present and waiting for a chance to ruin a person. The Jews believed that no one had to fall to this impulse. It was a matter of choice. The law and its consequences, therefore, would give people the power to defeat the bad impulse. Yet we know that no one has perfectly kept the law and thus has been swayed by the evil impulse. The problem is not the law, but the problem is man himself. The law is holy, just, good, spiritual, and perfect. Man is unholy, unjust, evil, carnal, and imperfect.

Verse 24 probably metaphorically refers to the custom of King Mezentius, the king of the Etruscans. Mezentius punished the captured soldiers of Aeneas by chaining them to a rotting corpse face to face, mouth to mouth, hand to hand, leg to leg, until the living person finally perished from the reek of the decomposition of the dead body, which in the end caused the living body to turn black and become putrefied.

In Romans 7:24 this dead body represents sin. The law cannot free us from sin unless we can perfectly keep it. No man ever did that, except Jesus. Paul is a saved man calling out to the Lord for help. The help comes in verse 25 from God through Jesus Christ.