

ROMANS 7:7-25

Well, a great deal of ground has been covered in the first 6 chapters of Romans.

Perhaps this would be a good time for a short review.

As you might remember, the first three chapters deal with man's total depravity.

God's final verdict has made it painfully apparent --- **"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."** Romans 3:23

And then, in the face of this hopeless situation, we were introduced to God's good news.

For the first time in history, and because of Christ's substitutionary death, God

can **"be just, and the justifier of him
which believeth in Jesus."**

Why?

Because His Son had become **"sin for us, who
knew no sin; that we might be made the
righteousness of God in him."**

2 Corinthians 5:21

And this **"righteousness"** can be ours on the
basis of faith, and on the basis of
faith alone.

Of course, even in Paul's day, there were
those who would insist that works must
be added to faith.

To answer their objections, Paul simply
pointed to the father of the Jewish
nation, and the fact that **"--- Abraham
believed God, and it was counted unto
him for righteousness."** Romans 4:3

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And then the focus changes.

From Romans 5:12 right through to Romans 8:13, we are concerned with the Christian's two natures.

Yes, upon conversion, the believer in Jesus Christ receives a new nature in addition to the old one he already has.

And from the very beginning, it is painfully apparent that they can agree on nothing, except, of course, the territory they wish to control.

On a national basis, a situation such as this usually leads to war, and history is literally pockmarked with the carnage that follows: Two opposing forces, with two opposing ideologies, both striving to control the same piece of territory.

And after a day of bloodshed, each one evaluates his success or failure by the amount of ground he has gained or lost. The same is true of the two opposing forces in the life of a Christian.

However, in this case, it's the believer's physical body that is involved.

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So, why are our *bodies* so important?

Well, first of all, they're important to God because His Son died to redeem them.

1 Corinthians 6:20 **"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."**

That's right. Not only has Jesus shed His precious blood to save our souls and our spirits, but He died to redeem our bodies.

And someday He will return for His purchased possession.

1 Corinthians 15:53 **"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."**

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And our physical bodies are tremendously important in our daily activities. They form the link between our mental and spiritual beings and the world around us.

Mankind has devised many ingenious inventions, and he has produced wonderful music and other works of art in his *mind*.

But none of this would exist without the assistance of his physical body.

So, our bodies are important both to us, and to our Creator.

And they are also of great value to Satan. Working through the sinful desires of our old nature, Satan had been able to alienate us from our Creator, and start us down the road to damnation.

And even after a person becomes a child of God, his old nature will do its best, or should I say its worst to harness the Christian's physical body for his own sinful desires.

But what about our legitimate desires?

Certainly, not all of our physical desires are sinful, are they?

Well, no, they're not.

For instance, our flesh has a genuine need for comfort.

We have to be kept at the right temperature, surrounded by the right atmosphere, or life will become a misery.

No, such needs are not sinful in themselves. However, the pursuit of physical comfort can swallow up all of our resources and all of our time until there's nothing left for our Lord.

Consequently, if we don't keep our bodies in subjection, they will become our god. That's why Paul cautioned Timothy to keep a close check on his bodily desires lest they compromise his ministry.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 **"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**

4: No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

No, it's not always comfortable to serve God, but it's very necessary.

You see, our physical bodies form an indispensable part of God's program. "-- **as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**" Romans 10:15

Yes, God's good news travels on human feet, and it's proclaimed by human tongues, and His will is accomplished by human hands.

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And there's another important reason why our bodies should be sanctified, or set apart for God's purposes.

I'm afraid we will have to wait until our next lesson to explore that other reason, but, in the mean time, here's a hint.

1 Corinthians 3:16 **"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"**

Yes, the believer's body is **"the temple of God"** and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

And for that reason, God has set up a special program to protect our physical bodies.

You might say the first step in God's program is covered in Chapter 6, and it has to do with our relationship to Jesus Christ.

As far as God is concerned, **"our old man is crucified with him, (that is Jesus) that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."**

No, God makes no attempt to reform our old nature. He simply puts it in the place of death.

On the other hand, our new life is to be lived out on the resurrection side of the grave.

Romans 6:4 **"--- like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."**

Yes, all that we have, and all that we are, is bound up in Christ.

Our salvation is possible, because He died for us.

Our victory is possible, because He lives for us.

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So then, it is both normal and reasonable to
put our old man in the place of death,
and **"walk in newness of life."**

But Chapter 7 makes it quite clear that it
can be a struggle.

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However, before we begin Chapter 7, I would
like to pass along a summary which I
have found most helpful.

It is possible to divide the human race into
three basic categories.

First of all, we have the natural man.

This is the individual, who by ignorance of
the facts, or by his own stubborn
rejection, has not availed himself of
God's gift of salvation.

Oh, he might be religious, but he can rise
no higher than his intellect and his
morals will carry him.

And as Romans 7:14 points out, that's not far enough.

Yes, "**--- the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.**"

Next, we come to the carnal Christian.

He has been gloriously delivered from the penalty of sin, but as yet he is still labouring under the domination of sin.

So, in spite of the aspirations of his new nature, his life is controlled by his old nature.

And, finally, we have the spiritual Christian.

He, too, has been the recipient of God's grace, but unlike the carnal Christian, he has identified himself with Jesus, in His death and resurrection.

No longer is he striving to overcome his old nature by his own efforts.

No longer is he straining every nerve to meet the requirements of God's law. Instead, he is allowing the life and loveliness of Christ to be played out in his life.

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So, with this brief outline, we are now ready to enter Chapter 7, a chapter of extreme darkness, sandwiched between two chapters of light.

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Paul's question in Romans 7:7 seems quite shocking: --- **"What shall we say then? Is the law sin?"**

Of course, he immediately adds the words **"God forbid,"** but even so, why would he ask such a question?

No doubt it has something to do with the previous verse where it says, "**But now we are delivered from the law.**"

Certainly, anything you would desire to be "**delivered from**" could hardly be considered an asset.

Nevertheless, the law is not sin.

No, it is simply incompatible with the sinner.

Paul summed it up quite nicely in V 14 when he said, "**the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.**"

So, to really understand the question, "**Is the law sin?**" we must examine the context.

As you will remember, Paul had been explaining our new status as born again believers.

In V 4, he says, **"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."**

Yes, as part of the bride of Christ, our actions should be governed by our love, not the dictates of the law.

So in a real sense, our deliverance from the law is beneficial.

Not because it is sin, but because it would have condemned us to a lost eternity.

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If you skim over Romans 7:7-25, you will find a little word popping up over and over again.

Do you see it?

Let me give you a clue.

Although it is scattered through the entire section, it appears no less than 26 times between V 15 and V 25.

Here's another clue.

If you turn your Bible upside down, it's the only word you can read.

I hope I don't get myself into trouble giving that advice, but it will help.

Now do you see it?

That's right. It's the little word "I."

So, why so many "I's"?

Well, it's because this section is autobiographical.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul is writing about himself.

From V 7 to V 14, he is describing his life as a natural man.

Certainly Paul, or Saul, as he was called then, was a very religious person.

Not only was he a teacher of the law, but as far as he was concerned, he was a keeper of the law.

In Philippians 3:4-6, he says, --- **If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:**
5: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;
6: Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

How much better can you get than that?

Like the rich young ruler, he could

confidently say --- **"All these have I kept from my youth up."**

Yes, **"touching the righteousness which is in the law"** he considered himself **"blameless."**

Nevertheless, he was lost.

And to make matters worse, he had no idea he was lost.

He had a religious zeal, but one that made him the enemy of the Son of God.

Acts 8:3 tells us, he **"--- made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."**

So, how could a man who was so familiar with the law, be so wrong?

Simply because he only understood the letter of the law, but was completely ignorant of its real meaning.

You see, God looks upon the heart, and so does His law.

Man's law, even in the most civilized societies, cannot condemn a person of murder until someone dies.

But, God's law is concerned with the motive, not just the action.

He calls anger without a cause murder.

And He calls lust adultery.

In short, the Word of God **"is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."** Hebrews 4:12.

Certainly Paul had the letter of the law firmly planted in his mind, but the thoughts and intents of his heart were all wrong.

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When I was a boy, refrigerators were just coming into vogue, and iceboxes were still quite common.

There was a small barn in our neighbourhood
where blocks of ice were stored in
sawdust to supply the neighbourhood.
I remember going into that barn and standing
in the semi-darkness.

All was cool and comfortable, and the air
seemed absolutely pure.

But then I noticed a sunbeam coming through
a small window in the peak.

To my surprise, that shaft of light was
literally filled with a fine dust.

In like manner, when God's light shone into
Paul's darkened heart, it revealed
what had been previously unknown, and
it was not a pretty picture.

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Sin has never been a pretty picture, but
today, we are quite skilled at
touching it up.

Adultery is simply called an affair.

And a liar is an extrovert with a lively imagination, and so on.

After awhile, everything is sporting a new label, and sin becomes acceptable, even attractive.

But God puts the poison label back on the bottle.

As Paul put it, **"I had not known sin, but by the law."**

So, when God's light shone through that little window in Paul's darkened heart, **"--- the commandment, which was ordained to life" he "found to be unto death."**

And that's what Paul is writing about in Romans 7:7-14. **"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I**

had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

¹⁰ And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

¹² Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin,

that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

Yes, the law was given for the good of mankind, and the peace and preservation of society.

But practically speaking, the law had quite another affect.

In the same manner that something that is straight exposes that which is crooked, so the law was the litmus test that exposed our sinful condition.

Well then, was that the main reason for the law?

Was it simply given to drive men to despair?
No, not at all.

As Galatians 3:24 tells us, "--- **the law was
our schoolmaster to bring us unto
Christ, that we might be justified by
faith.**"

Yes, the law reveals our need of the Great
Physician, and, by the way, the
prophets reveal the identity of the
Great Physician.

Paul was lacking in both these areas.
His interpretation of the law had made him
an enemy of Christ.

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But then everything changed.
On the road to Damascus, he met his Lord.
And even though the brightness of his
encounter struck him blind

temporarily, it opened his spiritual eyes.

Not only did he recognize the true identity of the Son of God, but he recognized his true condition in the eyes of the law.

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And so Paul was gloriously saved, and all his struggles melted away, right?

Well, no.

As a new believer, he now possessed two natures.

And not only two natures, but two natures which were diametrically opposed to each other.

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Let's take a moment to look at Paul's two natures, which, by the way, are no different than our own.

First of all, their presence in his life produced a tremendous struggle.

His words, in Romans 7:15 make that quite evident --- **"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."**

Actually, that's not too surprising when you stop and examine Paul's two natures.

Ephesians 4:22 tells us the old man **"is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,"** while 1 John 3:9 insists our new nature can do nothing wrong --- **"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."**

Of course, such a situation can only produce conflict.

Galatians 5:17 **"For the flesh lusteth
against the Spirit, and the Spirit
against the flesh: and these are
contrary the one to the other: so that
ye cannot do the things that ye
would."**

It's no wonder then that we hear Paul crying
out, **"O wretched man that I am! who
shall deliver me from the body of this
death?"**

But, what about those resources we
discovered in Chapter 6?

Wasn't Paul the author of these words?

Well, yes, under the direction of the Holy
Spirit, he was, but not at that
particular time.

In the passage before us, Paul is describing
himself as a young believer who is

totally unaware of his new position in Christ.

And as we have already noted, you can almost hear the agony in his voice --- **"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."**

At this point in his life, there seems to be no answer to his dilemma, but at least he has come to this conclusion: V 16-19 **"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good."**

¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

19 **For the good that I would I do
not: but the evil which I would not,
that I do."**

Cold comfort under the circumstances, but at least he has recognized an important principle.

Yes, there's a struggle going on between good and evil, and it seems to have a life of its own.

And, by the way, this struggle between the forces of good and evil are as old as time itself.

Even in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden, God's good creation was challenged by evil.

And then we have the struggle between Jacob and Esau even before they were born.

On a national level, we have the struggle between the Israelites and the former residents of the Promised Land.

And even after God's people were relatively established, there was the struggle between the house of David and the house of Saul.

Now we see this same struggle between good and evil in the life of the believer.

And, in this case, it's between the new Saul and the old Paul, and it's literally tearing him apart.

And to make matters worse, Paul is not winning.

However, he has reached this conclusion:

V 20 **"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."**

I wouldn't have been surprised if the serpent in the garden had said, *The Devil made me do it*. But surely Paul isn't making such an excuse.

Well, no, he isn't, and neither should we.

Oh, I know the devil can tempt us, even tempt us severely, but in the end, the choice is ours.

Yes, "**--- every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.**" James 1:14

And Paul isn't passing the buck either.

When he said, "**It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me,**" he was simply recognizing the fact that he was losing the battle in spite of his sincere desire to serve God.

Romans 7:21-23 "**I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present**

with me.

²² For I delight in the law of God
after the inward man:

²³ But I see another law in my
members (that is my physical body)
warring against the law of my mind,
and bringing me into captivity to the
law of sin which is in my members."

Certainly his theology was right, but it
offered him no comfort.

V 24 "O wretched man that I am! who shall
deliver me from the body of this
death?"

And you know what? That will always be the
mental condition of the child of God
who is controlled by his old nature.
He can fall into sin, even backslide into
sin, but he can never be happy in sin.

No, a lamb can never be happy living like a pig.

But there is deliverance.

There is an answer to Paul's agonizing question --- **"who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"**

And it's found in the very next verse.

V 25 **"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."**

Yes, at the present time, he was serving the wrong master, but he knew deliverance was at hand.

--- **"through Jesus Christ our Lord"** it is possible to **"serve the law of God"** rather than **"the law of sin."**

As we have already discovered in Chapter 6,
Christ is the source of our victory as
well as the author of our salvation.

Romans 8:32 **"He that spared not his own Son,
but delivered him up for us all, how
shall he not with him also freely give
us all things?"**

And one of these **"all things"** is our victory
over sin.

He has already died for us, and He is
willing to live for us.

As we identify ourselves with Christ in His
death and resurrection, we can be a
partaker of His victory.

Yes, it is possible, but it will be a
battle.

However, it is a battle in which we are
followers, not the Commander.

And who is the Commander?

We will be talking about that in our next lesson.

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One evening, shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus comforted His disciples with this promise **"--- I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."**

He also said **"--- he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."**

That's right. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter and our Teacher, but He has another ministry.

Yes, He does.

And in our next lesson, found in Romans
Chapter 8, we will discover just
exactly what that other ministry is.