

Romans Chapter 7

The Believer's Relationship to the Law

The twin themes of Romans chapter 7 are 1) **the believer's relationship to the law** and 2) **the utter failure of the law to sanctify**. Let us compare Romans chapter 7 with Romans chapter 6:

	Romans 6	Romans 7
Key Word in Chapter	SIN (see verses 1, 2, 6, 7, 10-23) 11 times	LAW (see verses 1-14, 16, 22, 25) 18 times
The Believer's Relationship	The Believer's Relationship to Sin	The Believer's Relationship to Law
Dominion	Sin has dominion (6:14)	The Law has dominion (7:1)
Death	I died to sin (6:2)	I died to the law (7:4)
Freedom	Free from sin (6:18)	Free (delivered) from the law (7:3,6)
Newness	Walk in newness of LIFE (6:4)	Serve in newness of SPIRIT (7:6)
Fruit of the Flesh Fruit of the Spirit (God's LIFE)	Romans 6:21 Romans 6:22	Romans 7:5 Romans 7:4

To have victory in the Christian life the believer must **KNOW**, **RECKON** and **YIELD** (see notes on Romans **Chapter 6**). Faith in the finished work of Christ is the key. The human tendency is to try to live the Christian life in the flesh, by works, by our own human effort and striving, by trying and struggling, by making resolutions, by trying to follow rules and regulations and schedules, etc. The more we try, the more we struggle and fail. The whole point of Romans chapter 7 is that sanctification (holiness) by the law just does not work! See Galatians 3:1-5.

We must keep in mind the statement Paul made in Romans 6:14 -- "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." This implies that if we were under law, then sin would have dominion over us. What does **GRACE** mean and what does **LAW** mean? Consider the words of Watchman Nee:

Grace means that God does something for me; law means that I do something for God. God has certain holy and righteous demands which He places upon me: that is law. Now if law means that God requires something of me for their fulfillment, then deliverance from law means that He no longer requires that from me, BUT HIMSELF PROVIDES IT. Law implies that God requires me to do something for Him; deliverance from law implies that He exempts me from doing it, and that in grace He does it Himself . . . The trouble in

Romans 7 is that man in the flesh tried to do something for God. As soon as you try to please God in that way, then you place yourself under law, and the experience of Romans 7 begins to be yours. [*The Normal Christian Life*, p. 105. The use of quotations in this chapter by Watchman Nee does not mean that we are in agreement with everything that he writes.]

The problem is not with the law (see Rom. 7:12); the problem is with sinful man (Rom. 7:14; 8:7).

Brief Outline of Romans 7:1-6

- Verse 1-The principle is set forth.
- Verses 2-3-The illustration given: marriage.
- Verse 4-The application is made.
- Verses 5-6-The application is further explained.

Romans 7:1

"**Dominion**" means to be under the lordship of. The law is lord over a man (rules over a man), and thus a man is subject to the law as long as he lives. **HE IS UNDER THE LAW AS LONG AS HE LIVES!** There is only one thing that can break the man's relationship to law: **DEATH!**

Romans 7:2-3 (the illustration of marriage)

"**Which hath a husband**" -- this means she is married, is under her husband and is to be subject to him. "**Bound**" means to be "tied" (when two people are married they are tied together for life; they are bound together until death parts them—see Matthew 19:5-6). Marriage is **BINDING** until one of the persons involved dies (see 1 Cor. 7:39). No one can be loosed from the law of marriage until this death takes place.

Marriage is a life long commitment. As long as her husband is alive she is not free to marry another person or enter into a relationship with another person -- this would be adultery. If her husband dies she is then free (1 Cor. 7:39). Death ends the relationship and allows for a new relationship. For the Lord's teaching on marriage and divorce, see Luke 16:18 (one of many places). The main point of the illustration is this: **DEATH BREAKS THE RELATIONSHIP AND MAKES POSSIBLE A NEW RELATIONSHIP.**

Romans 7:4

I am bound by the law. It has dominion over me (v.1). How shall I ever be delivered and set free? (cf. v.6). In Christ's death I **DIED!** I died to the law! The law can never die, but I died! My death makes possible a new relationship to a new husband: "that ye should be married to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead" (v.4). Because I died with Christ I am **FREE FROM THE LAW.** Because I am alive in Christ I can be **JOINED TO HIM IN A WONDERFUL RELATIONSHIP.** God has made it possible (by His grace) for us to be cut loose from the law and to be joined to Jesus Christ (in **UNION** with Him). Christ, not the law, now has dominion over me. The law is a terrible husband -- strict, inflexible, stern, rigid, demanding and unbending. The Lord is a wonderful husband -- merciful, gracious, and He, by His power and life, **ENABLES** me to please Him. Just as a marriage relationship produces **FRUIT** (children), so my marriage to Christ produces fruit (see Rom. 6:22; Gal. 5:22-23). See also John 15:1-7: "fruit" "more fruit" "much fruit."

Notice that there is only one woman, while there are two husbands. The woman is in a very difficult position, for she can only be wife of one of the two, and unfortunately she is married to the less desirable one. The man to whom she is married is a good man; but the trouble lies here, that the husband and wife are totally unsuited to one another. He is a most particular man, accurate to a degree; she on the other hand is decidedly easy-going. With him all is definite and

precise; with her all is casual and haphazard. He wants everything to be just so, while she takes things as they come. How could there be happiness in such a home?

And then that husband is so exacting! He is always making demands upon her. And yet one cannot find fault with him, for as a husband he has a right to expect something of his wife; and all his demands are perfectly legitimate. There is nothing wrong with the man and nothing wrong with his demands; the trouble is that he has the wrong kind of wife to carry them out. The poor woman is in great distress. She is fully aware that she often makes mistakes, but living with such a husband it seems as though *everything* she says and does is wrong! What hope is there for her? If only she were married to that other Man all would be well. He is no less exacting than her husband, but He also helps much. She would fain marry Him, but her husband is still alive. What can she do? She is 'bound by law to the husband' and unless he dies she cannot legitimately marry that other Man.

The first husband is the Law; the second husband is Christ; and you are the woman. The law requires much, but offers no help in the carrying out of its requirements. The Lord Jesus requires just as much, yea more (Matt. 5:21-48), but what He requires from us He Himself carries out in us. The law makes demands and leaves us helpless to fulfill them; Christ makes demands, but He Himself fulfills in us the very demands He makes. Little wonder that the woman desires to be freed from the first husband that she may marry that other Man! But her only hope of release is through the death of her first husband, and he holds on to life most tenaciously. Indeed there is not the least prospect of his passing away (Matt. 5:18). The Law is going to continue for all eternity. If the Law will never pass away, then how can I ever be united to Christ? How can I marry a second husband if my first husband resolutely refuses to die? There is one way out. If he will not die, I can die, and if I die the marriage relationship is dissolved. Verses 1 to 3 show that the husband should die, but in verse 4 we see that in fact it is the woman who dies! The Law does not pass away, but I pass away, and by death I am freed from the Law. How do I die? When Christ was crucified, I was crucified with Him. On the hill of Calvary it was forever done (Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pp.107-109).

But if I am dead, how can I be married to another? In Christ's death I died and in Christ's resurrection I LIVE! Thus I can be joined in marriage to Christ!

The believer is married to Christ! It's a LOVE RELATIONSHIP not a LAW (LEGAL) RELATIONSHIP. This love relationship (joined to Christ and in union with Him) is what Christianity is all about. Christianity is not a RELIGION, it's a relationship to a PERSON, the Son of God (John 17:3). It's not *doing something* but it's *knowing Someone* (John 17:3; 1 John 2:3-4). It is not a set of rules and it is not a system of morality. It is a unique and intimate relationship with the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Many in our day have lost sight of this truth. For many the Christian life has degenerated into another legalistic religious system. It is common for people to get wrapped up in rules and regulations and requirements and duties. It is easy for one to think that the Christian life is reading the Bible and praying and witnessing and memorizing and doing certain things and not doing certain other things. We know how a Christian ought to live, we know how a Christian ought to act, we know how a Christian ought to speak, we know how a Christian ought to think, we know the kinds of things a Christian ought to do and we know the kinds of things a Christian ought not to do, AND WITHOUT REALIZING IT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE HAS LOST THE VERY THING THAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT FROM EVERY OTHER RELIGION. We have missed the whole point.

To emphasize this, let's see what the Bible does not say:

Philippians 1:21 -- For to me to live is *reading my Bible, memorizing Scripture, praying at least 15 minutes daily and witnessing at every opportunity.*

Philippians 3:8 -- I count all things but loss for the excellency of *trying to guard my tongue, trying to overcome my bad habits and trying to have my daily devotions.*

Philippians 3:10 -- That I may *do this and avoid doing that and that I may force myself to witness and avoid every appearance of evil.*

Revelation 2:4 -- Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy *daily Bible reading schedule and thou hast broken thy New Year's resolutions and thou hast failed to keep the Ten Commandments.*

2 Corinthians 5:9 -- Wherefore we labour (we are ambitious), that, whether present or absent, we may *watch our temper, keep following our strict diet, memorize verses, get enough rest, and not watch too many bad television shows.*

What do these verses really say? In the above verses the emphasis is upon KNOWING and LOVING and PLEASING a PERSON! Read carefully Colossians 1:9-12. Notice the emphasis of this great prayer: to know His will (v.9), to walk with Him (v.10), to please Him (v.10), to increase in my knowledge of Him (v.10), to be strengthened by Him (v.11), to be joyful in Him (v.11), to thank Him (v.12)!

Again let us think of the marriage relationship. There are many things the husband must do and there are many things the husband must not do. There are duties he must carry out, there are responsibilities he must meet and there are obligations he must perform. But why does he do all these things? BECAUSE HE HAS DECIDED TO LOVE A PERSON -- namely his wife. The wife does many things: prepares meals, washes the dishes, cleans the floor, washes the clothes, etc. But WHY does she do all these things? Is it because her husband has given her a long list of THOU SHALT's and THOU SHALT NOT's? Hopefully this is not the reason. She is doing these things because she is responding to the love of her husband. The marriage relationship is based on love, not law.

What then is the Christian life all about? The Christian life is simply knowing a Person, loving Him, seeking to please Him, walking with Him, honoring Him, obeying Him, thanking Him, rejoicing in Him, delighting in Him, trusting in Him, growing in Him, talking to Him, talking to others about Him, abiding in Him, learning of Him, learning from Him, sitting at His feet and enjoying His presence. Note the emphasis on HIM (on a PERSON)!

As we go through each day, are we walking with a Person and enjoying Him or are we following a religious, legalistic routine? If we really have that unique intimate love-relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, then this will change everything we do. This will change PRAYER (prayer is talking to the Person I love). This will change BIBLE STUDY (I want to get to know this Person better!). This will change WITNESSING (I want to introduce others to this wonderful Person! I want others to know the Christ I know and love). Compare Revelation 2:2-4.

Are we walking with a Person or are we working at a religion? In light of John 17:3, can we say from our hearts: "I KNOW THIS PERSON AS MY SAVIOUR, MY LORD, MY FRIEND, MY SOVEREIGN MASTER, MY HELPER, MY SHEPHERD, MY EVER-PRESENT COMPANION... (and so many more things that could be said)"?

Romans 7:5

Verse 4 talks about the fruit of the new relationship; Verse 5 looks at the fruit that was produced under the old relationship. In union with Christ and abiding in Him I can bring forth fruit unto God (v.4). In the flesh (see Romans 8:8-9) the motions (passions) of sins, which were (aroused) by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death (v.5). Compare also Romans 6:21 (the fruit of the old life) and Romans 6:22 (the fruit of the new life). The law can never conquer my passions. It can only arouse my passions. Notice the words that are joined together in this verse: **LAW-SINS-DEATH** and then compare Romans 8:2.

Romans 7:6

"But now (now that we are saved and IN CHRIST) we have been (past tense) delivered (released, compare 7:2 "loosed" and 7:3 "free") from the law, that having died to that by which we were held (bound); we should be serving (as God's slave--6:22) in newness of spirit (compare Romans 8:2) and not in the oldness of the letter (a reference to the law). The law can never deliver a person. We need God's Spirit and God's life. The believer can say, "I died to the law because of Christ's death and I live to serve God because of Christ's resurrection." Paul said it this way, "For I through the law died to the law that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19 and see also Gal. 2:20). Do you recognize the wonderful fact that as a believer in Christ you have DIED to the law and are ALIVE unto God?

Romans 7:7

Notice what we have been told about the law so far in this chapter:

Verse 2 -- bound by the law . . . loosed (released) from the law
 Verse 3 -- free from the law
 Verse 4 -- dead to the law
 Verse 5 -- the law arouses our sinful passions
 Verse 6 -- delivered (released) . . . we were held (bound)

The law sounds like something horrible! How terrible the law must be if I need to be freed from it and delivered from it! It has me held and bound! It arouses my sinful passions! The law sounds like some very evil thing, but it is not, and Paul corrects this false idea: "IS THE LAW SIN?" Is the law something evil and sinful and wicked? "GOD FORBID!" Perish the thought! Let it not be! The real problem is not with the law! Don't blame the law! (The question is actually answered in Romans 7:12. The law is the very opposite of sin!)

See the discussion of the mirror illustration under Romans 3:20 in these notes. The purpose of the mirror is to show the person that his face is dirty. The problem is not with the mirror but with the person's face. The mirror is not dirty at all! But the mirror makes known the dirt that is on the face. You cannot blame the mirror for the dirty face. "Nay" means "on the contrary." The law is not sin but it makes known sin (Rom. 3:20). The mirror is not dirty but it makes known dirt. "I had not known sin." Paul was ignorant of his own sin. [Before the mirror came along the person thought he had a clean face!] As the mirror shows dirt so the law shows (and convicts of) sin.

Paul gives a specific example of how the law makes known sin. His illustration is the Tenth Commandment. "Lust" means "a strong desire, a strong desire for what others have, covetousness, a great longing for what someone else has." To paraphrase: "I would have been ignorant of this dreadful sin of coveting that was in me, except for the fact that God has an excellent mirror especially suited for revealing the covetousness of my own heart, namely the Tenth Commandment (Ex.20:17): "THOU SHALT NOT **COVET** (HAVE A STRONG DESIRE FOR THINGS THAT OTHERS HAVE)." God has a very special mirror for showing a particular kind of dirt, the dirt of covetousness, and this mirror is called the Tenth Commandment.

Romans 7:8

"**But sin** (the real culprit), **taking occasion** (opportunity) **by the commandment** (the Tenth Commandment), **wrought** (produced, worked) **in me all manner** (every kind of) **concupiscence** (lust, strong and ardent desire, same word as LUST in v.7). **For without the law** (before the commandment came-v.9) **sin was dead** (inactive, lifeless, dormant, showing little activity)." Without the mirror the person is not very much aware of his dirty face but once the mirror comes along that dirt just seems to jump to life! "Wow, look at that dirt!" It was there all the time but the mirror made him aware of it! Think of a snake coiled up and sleeping in the sun. It is

inactive and almost seems dead. But if you come along and poke it and disturb it that snake will really come alive (be aroused to activity). This is what the law does to sin!

Illustration: Think of the Second Commandment in Exodus 20:4. This command is holy and just and good. There is nothing wrong with it. But when sinful man is confronted with a holy command, what does he naturally do? He rebels and revolts against it! God says THOU SHALT and the rebel answers I WILL NOT! God says THOU SHALT NOT and the rebel answers I MOST CERTAINLY WILL! Thus we have the tragic account of Exodus 32:7-8. The sin of idolatry was always in their hearts but the commandment aroused it. The sin of idolatry was dead and inactive and dormant before the commandment was given. They did not make golden calves as a habit before this time. The law arouses and incites sin. Can we blame the Second Commandment for the golden calf? God forbid!

Romans 7:9

"**Once**" refers to the time before Paul was confronted with God's law, the time before the commandment came. "**Alive**" carries the meaning of undisturbed, unconvicted, not realizing the great death sentence that he was under. Everything seemed fine (like the person with the dirty face who has not yet looked into the mirror. Everything seems fine but it is not fine. The problem is there even though I don't realize it yet). "**Sin revived**" means "sin came to life again, lived again" (it's a word used of resurrection). The commandment revives sin and resurrects sin (just as the snake is suddenly aroused to life). "**I died**"—I suddenly realize that I'm a law breaker and law breakers deserve death! Thus the law is called "the ministration of death" and "the ministration of condemnation" (2 Cor. 3:7,9). God's holy law convicts and "slays" the sinner!

Romans 7:10

"**Ordained to life**"—This expression is explained in Matthew 19:16-17 and Luke 10:25-28. All a person needs to do to LIVE and to inherit eternal life is to keep the law. But he must keep it perfectly and completely and he must do so throughout his entire life! The problem is that no person has ever done this and no sinful person will ever do this! Those who have clean faces do not have to fear the mirror. The problem is that none of us have clean faces! We are all sinners and thus the law condemns us all! "**I found to be death**"—As I was confronted with the law I realized my own sinful disobedience to the law and I had to face up to the awful penalty of a broken law which is death.

Romans 7:11

Who is responsible for deceiving you and killing you? Who is the real culprit? Who is the real deceiver and the real killer? SIN!!!

Hebrews 3:13 - SIN the deceiver!

James 1:15 - SIN the killer!

But sin took advantage of the law.

Romans 7:12

This verse is the conclusion of the section (the conclusion indicated by the word "**wherefore**") and it answers the question raised in verse 7. The problem is not with the law. The law is a perfect reflection of the God who gave it. [It's an excellent mirror. It can show me my dirt, but it can't make me clean!] The law is holy but it can't make me holy. The law can never sanctify. It can only show me how unholy I am! The law is just (righteous) but it can never justify me (Romans 3:20; Gal. 2:16). It can only condemn me. The law is good but it can never make me good. It can only show me my wretchedness (Rom. 7:24) and the evil that dwells within me (Rom. 7:17-21).

Romans 7:13

Again we see that sin is the real culprit. The law does not bring death, SIN DOES (James 1:15; Rom. 6:23). Don't blame the law. Sin is the real enemy. But sin uses that which is good (the law). "**Exceeding sinful**" means "utterly sinful." The law magnified sin (the dirt was there all the time but I didn't think I had much of a problem until I looked in the mirror and then it appeared exceedingly dirty!). Whenever we see ourselves next to something HOLY we see ourselves as utterly sinful (compare Isaiah 6:1-5). Next to God's HOLY LAW (v.12) we appear utterly unholy!

Notice the three things that the law does with respect to sin:

The law **REVEALS SIN** (as a mirror) -- v.7; Rom. 3:20

The law **AROUSES SIN** (snake illustration) -- v.5, 9

The law **MAGNIFIES SIN** -- v.13 and compare 1 Cor.
15:56

Romans 7:14

The law is spiritual. There is no problem with the law. The law is not carnal and fleshly. The real problem is ME! In verse 14 the pronoun "**I**" is emphatic. I am carnal (fleshly), sold under sin (I'm a slave of sin). Notice in the following verses how often the pronoun "**I**" is repeated! Notice also that in verse 14 Paul says "**I am carnal.**" He is not talking of his past unsaved state but of his present state. How is it possible for a Christian to be carnal, fleshly, a slave of sin?

First of all we recognize that there is a sense in which a true believer is not carnal. Romans 8:9 says "ye are not in the flesh (carnal), but in the Spirit." Paul referred to his unsaved life as the time when he was "in the flesh" (see Rom. 7:5). In other words, positionally speaking, a true believer (saved person) is no longer in the carnal realm, but he is in the Spirit realm (Rom. 8:9). He is in Christ and Christ is in him. Also positionally the saved person is no longer a slave of sin as we have seen in Romans 6:17-18; 6:22. However, in Romans 7:14 Paul is not referring to his glorious *position* but to his actual *condition*. He is referring to his actual experience of living the Christian life. And it is possible for a true Christian to have a carnal WALK (compare 1 Cor. 3:1-4). This does not mean that Paul's Christian life was marked by and characterized by carnality. This is contradicted by everything we know about the apostle. But we must say that Romans 7:15-24 was the apostle's very real experience and **every** honest believer must confess that to one degree or another he too has experienced the very same thing and gone through the same struggle that is here depicted by the apostle.

The slavery that Paul was experiencing is explained in the following verses:

Romans 7:15

"**For**" -- this explains the expression "sold under sin" (slave of sin) in v.14. What is a slave? A slave is a person under the domination of another, and because of this he cannot do what he wants to do and he must do what he does not want to do, even what he hates. An example of this would be the children of Israel who were suffering under Egyptian slavery. The Israelite slave was forced to make bricks. He did not want to do this but he had to. He wanted to do other things, but he could not do what he wanted. So also, the person who is a slave of sin is in a perplexing struggle ("**I allow not**" means, "I know not, I don't understand, I am greatly perplexed"). What he wants to do he does not do. What he hates to do, that he does! I can't do what I want to do and I must do what I hate to do!

Romans 7:16

"**Consent**" means "agree." This person agrees with the law! Example: "Thou shalt not covet!" "I agree! This is a good law! God's command against coveting is holy and right and good. I say AMEN to it. I don't want to covet. I know it is wrong to covet. I hate covetousness, BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT COVET! I'm a slave to this sin!"

Romans 7:17

Here we have the problem of INDWELLING SIN, a major problem faced by every believer. It's interesting how Paul distinguishes between himself and indwelling sin: "NOT I . . . BUT SIN." This is an indication that Paul is writing from a saved person's perspective. The sinful self is not his real self. Paul was a new man in Christ, but the old Paul was responsible for the sin. Paul is not trying to get out of personal responsibility for his actions, but he is distinguishing between the two natures, as he also does in v.20.

Romans 7:17—"no longer I but sin." This is THE CRY OF DEFEAT!

Galatians 2:20—"no longer I but Christ." This is THE CRY OF VICTORY!

Romans 7:18

Literally it could be rendered: "**there does not dwell in me any good thing.**" This is a hard saying, but every believer needs to see this and believe it. Why do we have the parenthesis containing the words, "**that is, in my flesh**"? This is another hint that Paul was writing from the perspective of a saved person, not an unregenerate person. Paul had to make this parenthetical clarification because he knew that apart from his sinful flesh there was something (Someone) very good dwelling in him (see Romans 8:9). "**To will**" means "to desire, to want." I want to do good, I want to have victory over sin, I want to keep God's holy law and obey God's Word, but **I have NO POWER to perform.** I'm powerless! I'm helpless! I can't do it! I am totally UNABLE to live the Christian life!!! Have you made this discovery? The new creature in Christ has the will to do what is good and right (vs.18,19,21) but no power at all. The power is not in ourselves but is found only in God the Holy Spirit (Romans chapter 8 and compare Philippians 2:13).

So often we feel as if we still have to find something good in ourselves to offer to God. Bible teacher C. A. Coates, using a common illustration, shows the error of this viewpoint:

Suppose your neighbor had a heap of rubbish in his garden, and you saw him turning it over every day with a shovel. After a while he would leave the rubbish and return to the house looking very disappointed and crestfallen. You would be sure that he had expected to find something that was very important. One day you ask him over the hedge if there was anything valuable in the heap of rubbish he has in the yard. "Oh, no," he says; "it is only rubbish, of no value to me or to anyone else." But the next day you see him turning it over and over again, and looking as disappointed as ever, and this occurs day after day, week after week. You would think, "Whatever the man says, it is evident he has not given up hope of finding something."

Many believers are like this. They say that there is no good in themselves, and that they do not expect to find any; but, nevertheless, they suffer a good deal of disappointment from time to time, and this proves they haven't given up the thought of self-improvement.

Back to the neighbor across the hedge. One day you see your neighbor applying a lighted match to the heap of rubbish, and standing until the whole is consumed to ashes. You stroll down to the neighbor's hedge and remark about it. He says, "The owner of the garden knew all about it, and

he told me it was nothing but rubbish, and I proved it to be so every time I turned it over. And yet I must have had an idea there was something good in it, because I was so disappointed to find that it was nothing but rubbish. Now I am glad that it is burned, I shall waste no more time over it." [C. A. Coates, *Spiritual Blessings*, (Kingston-on-the-Thames, GB: Stow Hill Bible & Tract, 1964), p. 36.]

As far as God is concerned, the heap of rubbish is burned, but we need to count on this fact as being true!

Romans 7:19

The thought is the same as in verse 15. The good that I want to do, that I don't do; the evil which I don't want to do, that I do! All of these verses describe the struggle of those who are true believers. The unregenerate do not have this kind of struggle because they only have one nature (a corrupt, sinful, Adam-like nature). They desire evil and they do it (unless constrained otherwise). They hate what is good and right and they avoid it. The unsaved sin and love it. The believer sins and hates it. The desire to do good, such as we find in verse 20, is the desire of the "new man" not the desire of an unsaved man.

Romans 7:20

The thought parallels verse 17. I'm powerless to break the power of indwelling sin. I can't do it! In much the same way, there was nothing the Israelites could do to break the power of the Egyptians over them. What was the one thing they needed? A DELIVERER! One who could rescue them from the slavery by HIS POWER!

Romans 7:21

This law is the "law of sin and death" which is also mentioned in 7:23; 7:25 and 8:2. I don't want to covet; I want to be content, but that evil sin of covetousness is right there with me (in my heart) and I am a slave to that sin and thus I must covet. I don't want to, but I do.

Romans 7:22

These words are inappropriate in the mouth of an unregenerate man. Only a saved man delights in God's law (as David, Ps.19:7-10; cf. Ps.119:35).

"**Delight**" means "agree" (compare v.16 "consent"). "I joyfully agree with the law of God!" I agree with God's law and desire earnestly to obey it, but I'm a slave and a captive to sin (v.23)!

Romans 7:23

Notice the great war and conflict and struggle that is taking place (compare Galatians 5:17). Notice who is fighting in this contest:

On the one side	On the other side
The one who agrees with and delights in God's law (v.16, 22)	Indwelling sin (v.17,v.20)
The one who hates sin (v.15)	The flesh in which is no good thing (v.18)

The one who desires and wills to do good (v.18, 19)	
"The inward man" (v.22)	The "wretched man" (v.24)
The renewed "mind" (v.23, 25)	The flesh that is under the law of sin and death (v.23, 25)

Who is winning this war? Verse 23 says that I have already lost! I am a prisoner of war! A captive! I'm defeated!

Romans 7:24

"**Wretched man**" means "miserable man." See the same word "wretched" in Revelation 3:17. A miserable man in a miserable condition! Every believer needs to come to the place where he recognizes his own wretchedness. We need to see our desperate need, even as believers. God brings us to the depths of despair, not to keep us there, but that He might bring us to the heights of His grace. The wretched man is a captive and slave of sin -- wanting to do what is right but having no power to perform the good and ending up doing what he hates!

"**Who shall deliver me?**" In this cry for a Deliverer, notice that he does **not** say: WHAT SHALL I DO? or HOW SHALL I DELIVER MYSELF? No, this person has come to the end of himself. Dependence on SELF has led only to defeat and failure. He has found himself to be utterly powerless and helpless and without any hope, but finally he cries out for deliverance outside of Himself. The law cannot help him. The law cannot make him holy. The law cannot sanctify him. He cries out for the LORD, not the law. The law is not fulfilled by us; it is fulfilled IN US (as we shall see in Rom. 8:4) by the power of the Holy Spirit whose fruit is LOVE which is the fulfilling of the law (Gal. 5:22; Rom. 13:8-10).

"**Body of this death**"—compare Romans 6:6--"body of sin"; Romans 7:23 "law of sin which is **in my members**". Our bodies are yet unredeemed (see Rom. 8:23). The body is the headquarters of indwelling sin and the members of the body are the instruments of indwelling sin (compare 6:13).

Romans 7:25

The Lord Jesus Christ is the great Deliverer (Rom. 11:26 and compare 2 Cor. 1:10). The word "**thank**" is a faith word. "I believe that Jesus Christ is my Deliverer from sin. Thank You! I believe that I am no longer sin's slave. Thank You! I believe that I'm no longer a prisoner of sin but I'm a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Thank You! My help comes not from my SELF but from my SAVIOUR! Thank You!" Victory does not come through our fleshly schemes and self-improvement methods. Victory comes only through and in the living God: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14).

The last part of verse 25 concludes and sums up verses 15-24 ("so then"). With the mind I serve the law of God (see v.22) but with the flesh the law of sin (see v.23).

Additional Thoughts on Romans Chapter 7

The key words: "LAW" "I".

The key question: How can I live a holy life?

The startling answer: I can't! (v.15,v.18).

There are two great lessons that every person needs to learn. The first lesson pertains to salvation; the second lesson pertains to living the Christian life:

Lesson #1 -- **I CANNOT SAVE MYSELF** (I need a Deliverer, One who can save me). See Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8-9; Jeremiah 13:23; etc.

I must come to that point in my life when I recognize that I am a sinner and that I am hopeless and helpless (Rom. 5:6 "without strength"). The Lord must do it all. I need to stop trying and start trusting. I must do the believing; God must do the saving.

Lesson #2 -- **I CANNOT LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE** (I need a Deliverer, One who can save me from the Power of indwelling sin).

I trusted Christ for salvation and I am saved. Immediately I love Christ, want to please Him and serve Him and do His will and walk in His way. At first things seem to be going very well, but later I begin to have problems with sin. I can't understand why this is so. At times it seems that I am losing more than winning. It seems there are more failures than there are victories. The Romans 7 struggle is very real. Finally I come to the point where I realize "I CAN'T!" "I cannot perform that which is good!" (v.18) I don't have what it takes to live the Christian life! I can't do it! And this is exactly what God wanted me to discover! See John 15:5. Just as I needed God for salvation, so I need God for sanctification (to live a set apart and holy life). It's God's LIFE (Gal. 2:20), it's God's GRACE (1 Cor 15:10); it's God's WORKING (Phil. 2:13); it's God's POWER (Col. 1:29; Phil. 3:10) and it's God's VICTORY (2 Chron. 20:15,17).

OTHER VIEWS ON ROMANS CHAPTER 7, VERSES 14- 25

1) There is the view that says that the man described in Romans 7:14-25 is the unregenerate man (unsaved man).

The following points argue strongly against this view:

- a) The present tense of verse 14 ("I AM") indicates that Paul has made a transition from his pre-regenerate experience in verses 7-13 to his present experience as a believer.
- b) This man "delights in the law of God after the inward man" (v.22) whereas the carnal mind of the unsaved man is enmity against God and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7). Enmity is the opposite of delight, thus the man of 7:22 is not "in the flesh" and his mind is not "the mind of the flesh."
- c) In 7:25 he says, "with MY MIND I serve the law of God" which is certainly not a description of the mind of the flesh described in Romans 8:5-7.

d) The person described in 7:14-25 is one whose will is toward that which is good (v.15,18, 19,21) and the evil that he does is in violation of that which he wills and loves (v.16,19,20). This is certainly not true of the unsaved man described in Rom. 8:5-8.

e) Every true believer knows only too well the struggle with indwelling sin and can identify with the man described in Rom. 7:14-25. The unregenerate man who has only the Adam-nature does not have this kind of struggle. The contradiction exists only in the believer. The unsaved person does not have a battle between two natures because he has only one nature (it takes two to fight).

f) The cry of 7:24 is not the cry of an unsaved person wanting to be saved from the penalty of sin; it is the cry of a saved person wanting to be saved from the POWER of indwelling sin.

(See *Romans* by John Murray, pp. 256-259 who states these arguments more clearly and in more detail than the above.)

2) Another view is held by many men in the Reformed tradition including A.W. Pink, which says basically that Romans 7:14-25 is to be the normal experience of the Christian.

According to this view, Christians are not to leave Romans 7 to get into Romans 8, but Christians are always to stay in Romans 7 throughout their Christian experience. These verses simply describe the conflict of the two natures in the child of God. Thus they would say that Romans 7:14-25 describes the normal, God-intended experience of a saved person as long as he is in this body. "There is no present deliverance from the carnal nature by the power of the Holy Spirit" (as A.W. Pink says in his tract entitled, *The Christian in Romans 7*).

First of all, we must say that there is much truth to this view. It is true that the believer will have a conflict between the two natures as long as he is in this body. The sin nature will never be eradicated and uprooted. There are certain things about this passage in Romans 7 which should always be true of the believer. The more we mature in the faith the more we should be conscious of our own sinfulness and wretchedness (v.24). The more we grow in the Lord the more we will know of "the plague of (our) own heart" (1 Kings 8:38) and our own depravity. Also we should always be aware of our utter helplessness to do what is right in and of ourselves. We do not have the power to perform that which is good (v.18). Without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5), and this shall ever be true. Thus we agree with these Reformed men that we should always stay in Romans 7 in the sense of knowing our sinfulness and helplessness and our moment by moment need of a Deliverer who is Christ Jesus.

On the other hand, we must disagree with these Reformed men for the following reasons. Romans 7 describes a man who contrary to his will FAILS TO DO WHAT IS GOOD AND INSTEAD DOES THE EVIL (Rom. 7:19). This may be the common experience of Christians but it would be absurd to call this the God-intended experience of a saved person. This would run contrary to all of the Scriptures which teach that the believer is responsible not only to will the will of God but also to do it (Phil. 2:13; James 1:22; etc.). Certainly the normal Christian life which God intends us to have is not one of failure and defeat and utter frustration. It is not God's desire that we fail to do the good we desire to do and it is not God's will that we should be doing the evil that we hate. Romans 7 brings us to the point where we cry out, "I CAN'T" but Romans 8 gives the answer, "GOD CAN!" I can't keep the law (Rom. 7:22-24) but the law can be fulfilled IN ME by the power of God (Rom. 8:4). So technically, it's not that the believer leaves Romans 7 to get to Romans 8, but perhaps it is better to say that Romans 7 gets us to Romans 8. Romans 7 teaches us valuable lessons about ourselves -- about our helplessness and sinfulness and inability to please God by ourselves. May we never forget these lessons.

A.W. Pink taught that the future tense in Romans 7:24 ("who shall deliver me") indicates that there is no present "deliverance" from the carnal nature by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians will not be delivered "from this body of death" until the future coming of Christ, he taught. This teaching that there is no present deliverance from the power of sin certainly runs contrary to many passages of Scripture. Indeed, Paul himself just three verses later writes, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free (past tense!) from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Pink says that such a deliverance is future but Paul says it has already been accomplished! Believers need to claim it by faith! It is true that our final redemption of the body is yet future (as we will see in our study of Rom. 8:23) and that we live in unredeemed bodies that are still very much subject to sin and death. But we need to make a distinction between deliverance from the **PENALTY OF SIN** (God has delivered me from this), deliverance from the **POWER OF SIN** (God is delivering me from this as I by faith claim the finished work of Christ -- see Romans chapter 6) and deliverance from the very **PRESENCE OF SIN** (God shall do this when I am brought into His presence).

The God-intended Christian life is not the life of doing the evil which I hate and failing to do the good that I want to do (Romans 7:19). The God-intended Christian life is not a life of captivity and bondage to sin (Rom. 7:23). Christ came to set us free (John 8:31-36)! It is not God's desire that we should live in perpetual defeat and failure and frustration days without end. No, the God-intended Christian life is set forth in many passages including these: Colossians 1:10-12; 1 John 3:18,22; Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 4:1-9; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-23; etc. May we so walk and so live!

"Run, John, Run! The Law Commands!
But Gives Me Neither Feet Nor Hands.
Far Grander News the Gospel Brings:
It Bids Me Fly and Gives Me Wings!"

Attributed to John Bunyan

Too many believers are trying to run without feet and without hands! By the power and grace of God may we soar!

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