

ROMANS From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 11

Romans 7:1-25

How Do We Live Out the Obedience of Faith in Our Lives

We are Freed from the Law to Produce Fruit for God (Romans 7:1-6)

Verse 1-3

Romans 7:1-3
 Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

1) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Look at the comparison between under the Law and freedom from the law and choose the more appropriate status.

Marriage law	Person alive	Person dies	Status If Alive to Law	Status If Dead to Law
Verses	For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, (v2a)	but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. (v2b)	So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. (v3a)	But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.(v3b)
From Law	A. Free B. Not Free	A.Released B. Bound	A. Sin B. Not sin	A. Sin B. Not sin

Verse 4-5

Romans 7:4-5
 So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in that we might bear fruit for God. For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.

2) a) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Look at the comparison between under the Law and freedom from the law and choose the more appropriate status.

Fruits under law	If Alive to Law	If Dead to Law
Verses	For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. (v5)	So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. (v4)
Freedom	A. Free from Penalty B. Not Free from Penalty	A. Released from law B. Bound to law
Lordship	A. Belong to Law B. Belong to no one C. Belong to God	A. Belong to Law B. Belong to no one C. Belong to God
Purpose	A. Fruit for God B. Fruit for death	A. Fruit for God B. Fruit for death

b) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. According to the video lecture, the bearing fruit analogy is Paul is trying to say that Christians will be:

- A. **Passive and Productive**
- B. Active and Productive
- C. Passive and Unproductive
- D. Active and Unproductive

Verse 5-6

Romans 7:5-6
 For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

3)a) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Look at the comparison between under the Law and freedom from the law and choose the more appropriate status.

Written	If Alive to Law	If Dead to Law
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Law		
Verses	Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? (v1)	But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. (v6)
Demand	A. Law has authority to demand B. Law has no authority to demand	A. Law has authority to demand B. Law has no authority to demand
Old and new	A. Old way (written code law) B. New way (Spirit)	A. Old way (written code law) B. New way (Spirit)
Serve	A. Can serve Christ B. Cannot serve Christ	A. Can serve Christ B. Cannot serve Christ

b) Comprehension question. “The new way of the Spirit” in verse 6 is similar to “new heart, and a new spirit” in Ezekiel 36:26. What is the point of the new system or covenant according to the video lecture?

- To help serve God from our hearts
- Produce new fruit by Holy Spirit

Quick Verse Reference
 Ezekiel 36:26-27
 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

	Legalism	Law fulfilling Freedom	Antinomianism/ Anti-law
Subscribed by	Jews	Paul	Joseph Prince
Description	Legalist/ Produce own righteousness	Free from the law so that Fulfill law from the heart	Rejects laws or legalism

4) Discussion question. There are 3 positions on how people look at the law. According to the video lecture, what are the 3 bad things that happen when one tries to fulfil the law with their own efforts?

#1- produce legalism

-judge ppl’s pedigree(family), morality, integrity, achievement-centered thinking

-feel good about self

- look down on others, gossip

#2 it obeys the letter but violates the spirit (misses the point of the law)

#3 ring fencing law- escalate human preferences into law (cannot bathe, own dragon items etc)

Background Information

Martin Luther

“We concede that we must also teach about good works and love. But we only teach these at the proper time and place - when the question deals with how we should live, not how we are justified.”

The Law is Not the Problem, It Is Our Sinful Nature (Romans 7:7-13)

Verse 7

Rom 7:7

What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”[

5) Objective question. Choose the appropriate answer(s) (can be more than one). What is the use of the law according to Paul and the video lecture?

A. X-ray Diagnosis

B. Weighing scale

C. Treatment

D. No use

Verse 8

Rom 7:8

But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.

6)Objective question. Choose the appropriate answer(s) (can be more than one). Which of the following is true?

A. The law makes us want to cross the line

B. Humans are susceptible to Contra-suggestibility

C. Law is God’s line

D. We want to draw our own line

E. No law then no sin

F. Humans disobey to try to show that they are independent and autonomous from God

G. Law stimulates rebellious nature in humans

H. Sin twists the function of the law from revealing, exposing, and condemning sin into encouraging and even provoking it.

I. We can blame the law for proclaiming God's will to behave in a certain way

Background Information

Cranfield

"Our hearts are utterly self-centered, and when such heart sees that is being called into question and criticized by the authority of the law, it 'seeks all the more furiously to defend itself.'"

Verse 9-11

Rom 7:9-11

Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

7) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Paul is using an example from:

A. Adam's example in Genesis (Desire-Deception-Death)

B. Moses' law (Law-Commandment-Death)

Verse 12-13

Rom 7:12-13

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

8) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Which is true?

A. The law caused the death

B. Sin caused the death

Verse 14-20

Rom 7:14-20

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the

good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

9) a) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Which is true?

- A. Paul is talking about himself when he was an unbeliever
- B. Paul is talking about himself now as a believer
- C. Christians will not struggle with sin
- D. Christians will struggle with two natures of not wanting to sin and wanting to sin
- E. Apostle Peter sinned by being a hypocrite in Galatians 2:11

b) Discussion question. Christians cannot eradicate sin or suppress the desire to sin, but we can only substitute it with the life of Christ and discipline. Name some examples of these, may refer to the video lecture.

Substitution	Discipline
The gradual process of substituting our self-focused life with the life of Christ, learning to do this, aided by various crisis in life	Prayer, fasting, bible study (gamma), witnessing, using spiritual gifts, giving and fellowship

Case Studies

Case 1

Faye Wong attended a church in town that was really active in evangelism. Their pastor exuded an intense amount of enthusiasm and boldness in sharing the gospel. They emphasized that being “Spirit-filled” means living in victory and being totally healed. They quote Isaiah 53

“But he was pierced for our transgressions;
 he was crushed for our iniquities;
 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,

and with his wounds we are healed”

(Isaiah 53:5 ESV)

Faye loved attending this church as it made her very confident in her Christian life but on the other hand, when she is at home alone she secretly struggled with her sin. She read Romans 7 and was told that the passage was written about the experience of a Non-Christian and she felt very guilty because as a Christian she was experiencing the anguish of a Non-Christian. She doubted her salvation and was convinced she was not Spirit-filled because she had not experienced the robust faith of her pastor or church people.

10) a) Does it describe a life of an unbeliever or carnal Christian or a defeated Non-spirit-filled Christian?

Romans 7 describes the life of a Christian

This is a difficult question, and plenty of thoughtful people have been on both sides of this issue. Some believe that a believer could not talk like Paul does when he says, “I am unspiritual, sold as a slave under sin.” (v.14) He also virtually confesses that he sins regularly, even compulsively. “What I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do...” (v.15) “For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out” (v.19) Therefore, over the ages, many people have concluded that Paul is talking of himself as he was before conversion. Here, however, we are going to make a case that Paul is talking of his own present experience. The evidence —

There’s a change in verb tenses. The verbs of vv.7-13 are in the past tense, but from v.14 on all the tenses are present. A natural reading would tell us Paul is speaking of his own “now.” There’s a change in the situation. Verses 7-13 talk about sin “killing” him. He’s dead. But from v.14 on Paul describes an ongoing struggle with sin in which he refuses to surrender.

Paul delights in God’s law. He says, “In my inner being I delight in God’s law...” (v.22) and then goes on to say sin nonetheless is at work within him. Now unbelievers cannot delight in God’s law in their heart of hearts. In Romans 8:7, Paul says that “the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.” This categorically denies that any unbeliever can delight in God’s law. Chapter 8:7 nearly proves that 7:22 can’t be the words of an unbeliever.

Paul admits he is a lost sinner. He says, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.” (v.18) As we have seen in vv.7-13, unbelievers are not aware of being lost and so sinful that they can’t save themselves. In fact, even immature believers tend to be over-

confident and unaware of the depths of the depravity of their own hearts.

Sum: The speaker is Paul — a mature believer! (Nevertheless, those who hold the opposing opinion need to be treated with respect! Many smart, godly people have disagreed with the position given here.)

b) Discussion question. 2. What is the purpose of Paul writing about his struggle with sin in Romans 7? You may summarize the model answer below.

Relatable

Model Answer

To inform us about the real nature of Christian living otherwise, there will be much guilt and paralysis as in Faye's case.

Paul tells this there is an intense struggle going on within the Christian. Conversion to Christ does not instantly solve all our problems. It even results in some problems we had never experienced as unbelievers. Before our salvation, we were never in opposition with sin. We were unknowingly the slaves of sin, thinking all along we were serving our own interests. Before our conversion, we were enemies of God. Our struggle was the result of our opposition to Him and His present judgment in our lives. As a result of faith in Christ, our animosity toward God ended and a new animosity—toward sin—began. The struggle which Paul is describing in Roman 7:14-25 is the result of his conversion.

Secondly, it warns us that no one ever gets so advanced in the Christian life that they no longer see their sin. This is the apostle Paul talking! It warns us that if we ever perceive ourselves to be "over" sin, if we ever feel ourselves to be pretty good and mature Christians, we are deceived. For the more mature and spiritually discerning we get, the more we see the sin in our hearts. So, the more holy we become, the less holy we will feel. This is not false modesty. Even when we know and see ourselves making progress against many bad habits and attitudes, we will grow more aware of the rebellious and selfish roots that are still within us. The holier we are, the more we cry "What a wretch I am! Who will deliver me from this sin within!"

Thirdly, it warns us that no one gets so advanced that they don't struggle with sin. It is quite important to expect a fight with our sinful nature. In fact, just as a wounded bear is more dangerous than a healthy and happy bear, our sinful natures might become more stirred up and active because the new birth has mortally wounded it.

As a man nailed to the cross first struggles and strives and cries out with great strength and might [though] as his blood and life energies waste, his strivings become faint and seldom... So when a [Christian] first sets on a lust or sin to deal with it, it struggles with great violence

to break loose; it cries with earnestness and impatience to be satisfied and relieved... It may have a dying pang that makes an appearance of great vigor and strength... but it is over, particularly if it is kept from considerable success..."

– John Owen, On Mortification

"True Christianity is a fight... Do we find in our heart a spiritual struggle? Do we feel anything of the flesh lusting against the spirit and spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things we would? (Gal.5:17) Are we conscious of two principles within us, contending for the mastery? Do we feel anything of war in our inward man? Well, let us thank God for it! It is a good sign. It is strongly probable evidence of the great work of sanctification. All true saints are soldiers. Anything is better than apathy, stagnation, deadness, and indifference. We are in a better state than many. The most part of so-called Christians have no feeling at all... I say again, let us take comfort. The children of God have two great marks — they may be known by their inward warfare as well as by their inward peace."

-- J.C. Ryle, Holiness

On the other hand, it comforts us. It is typical, when we struggle with sin, to think that we must be terrible persons, or very wicked or immature to have such wrestling. But Romans 7 encourages us that temptation and conflict with sin, even some relapses into sin, are consistent with being a growing Christian.

"The most renowned and now crowned saints have, in the days of their being on earth, relapsed into one and the same sin. Lot was twice overcome with wine; Abraham did often lie, and twice lay his wife open to adultery to save his own life, which even the heathens would not have done... David in his wrath was resolved to slay Nabal and his family, but repented, and yet after this he fell into the foul murder of Uriah... Samson is by the Spirit of the Lord numbered among the worthies (Heb.11:32) yet he fell often into one gross sin. Peter you know relapsed often, and so did Jonah; and this comes to pass that they may see their own inability to stand, to resist or overcome temptations (Jude 14-16), so that they may be taken off from all false confidences, and rest wholly upon God, and only upon God, and always upon God..."

[But remember] God always makes even his dearest ones dearly smart for their relapses, as may be seen by his dealings with Samson, Jehoshaphat, and Peter. Ah, Lord! what a hard heart hath that man who can see thee stripping thy dearest ones for their relapses, and yet make nothing of returning to folly."

– Thomas Brooks, Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices

b) Reflection question. Some of us have never experienced this struggle with sin, why is it that we do not experience the struggle like Paul could it be possible that we are more spiritual than him?

The problem with many Christians is not their despair, like that of Paul, but their lack of it. If coming to the end of ourselves is essential to turn to God for our deliverance, then many Christians will never turn to God for victory over sin because they do not recognize their true condition or take it seriously enough. It was the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees who did not come to Jesus for forgiveness simply because they did not think they needed it. It is the "smooth-sailing saints" who do not come to the cross for deliverance from the power of sin in their lives because they do not agonize over their condition as Paul did. My concern is that I lack the kind of agony that Paul has. I lack the kind of intensity that Paul has.

We fail to agonize over sin because we have redefined our old sins, giving them new Christian labels. Aggressive, self-assertiveness, once condemned as sin, now becomes "zeal for the Lord." These are the same vices, the same sins, but we now sanctify them by putting Christian labels on them.

We live superficial, hypocritical lives, which deny the reality of our sin, and our failure to live as God requires.

We ignore and reject God's Law, as though it were "of flesh," while we are the ones who are spiritual (the exact opposite of what Paul says in verse 14).

We teach Christians to "cope" with their sin. Paul never teaches Christians to cope. In effect, we say to Christians that they need to learn to live with the agony. Paul says, "No, you don't. You need to have that agony so intense that you can't live with it, and you can only turn to God." We seek to convert our socially unacceptable sins to those sins which are socially acceptable. We know that robbery and murder are unacceptable to society, and so we redirect our sinful energies in areas that serve our own self-interest, but in ways that bring us the commendation of others, rather than their condemnation. We give up those sins for which society puts men in prison and take up those sins for which society will make us president.