

# ROMANS

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## Lesson 7

## Romans Chapter 7

In our last lesson, we saw the power of the Gospel to change us, and we looked at our role in that change as we are transformed into a new and eternal being. Later in our study, we will look at that transformation much closer (in Chapter 12). In this lesson, we are going to look at the struggle, and the battle, that starts the day we are born again—the day the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. We will see that Paul fought that same battle, and in the end he realized that Christ who saved him was also his rescuer in this battle. The same applies to us: through Christ, we have the ultimate victory.

So let's take some time this week to look at that struggle between the sinful nature of mankind and the reborn follower of Christ.

Read Romans Chapter 7 from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) below, or from your favorite version.

## Romans 7

### An Example from Marriage

<sup>1</sup>My friends, you surely understand enough about law to know that laws only have power over people who are alive. <sup>2</sup>For example, the Law says that a man's wife must remain his wife as long as he lives. But once her husband is dead, she is free <sup>3</sup>to marry someone else. However, if she goes off with another man while her husband is still alive, she is said to be unfaithful.

<sup>4</sup>That is how it is with you, my friends. You are now part of the body of Christ and are dead to the power of the Law. You are free to belong to Christ, who was raised to life so that we could serve God. <sup>5</sup>When we thought only of ourselves, the Law made us have sinful desires. It made every part of our bodies into slaves who are doomed to die. <sup>6</sup>But the Law no longer rules over us. We are like dead people, and it cannot have any power over us. Now we can serve God in a new way by obeying his Spirit, and not in the old way by obeying the written Law.

### The Battle with Sin

<sup>7</sup>Does this mean that the Law is sinful? Certainly not! But if it had not been for the Law, I would not have known what sin is really like. For example, I would not have known what it means to want something that belongs to someone else, unless the Law had told me not to do that. <sup>8</sup>It was sin that used this command as a way of making me have all kinds of desires. But without the Law, sin is dead.

<sup>9</sup>Before I knew about the Law, I was alive. But as soon as I heard that command, sin came to life, <sup>10</sup>and I died. The very command that was supposed to bring life to me, instead brought death. <sup>11</sup>Sin used this command to trick me, and because of it I died. <sup>12</sup>Still, the Law and its commands are holy and correct and good.

<sup>13</sup>Am I saying that something good caused my death? Certainly not! It was sin that killed me by using something good. Now we can see how terrible and evil sin really is. <sup>14</sup>We know that the Law is spiritual. But I am merely a human, and I have been sold as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup>In fact, I don't understand why I act the way I do. I don't do what I know is right. I do the things I hate. <sup>16</sup>Although I don't do what I know is right, I agree that the Law is good. <sup>17</sup>So I am not the one doing these evil things. The sin that lives in me is what does them.

<sup>18</sup>I know that my selfish desires won't let me do anything that is good. Even when I want to do right, I cannot. <sup>19</sup>Instead of doing what I know is right, I do wrong. <sup>20</sup>And so, if I don't do what I know is right, I am no longer the one doing these evil things. The sin that lives in me is what does them.

<sup>21</sup>The Law has shown me that something in me keeps me from doing what I know is right. <sup>22</sup>With my whole heart I agree with the Law of God. <sup>23</sup>But in every part of me I discover something fighting against my mind, and it makes me a prisoner of sin that controls everything I do. <sup>24</sup>What a miserable person I am. Who will rescue me from this body that is doomed to die? <sup>25</sup>Thank God! Jesus Christ will rescue me.

So with my mind I serve the Law of God, although my selfish desires make me serve the law of sin.

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As you read Paul's words, I'm certain that it may, at times, have seemed a bit confusing; but, overall, you probably recognized the struggle against sin that Paul was referring to. We all have felt it, if we're following Christ. We live in a new sanctified state, but we do so today in a body that is prone to sin. This causes an almost constant conflict from which only Jesus can rescue us. Consider the following questions:

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1. As we begin looking at Romans Chapter 7, we need to reflect back on Chapter 6. What did Paul tell us in Romans 6:2, Romans 6:11, and verses 15-18?
2. So even though we have died to sin and been reborn as followers of Christ, we continue to live on this earth in a body where our sin nature remains. This is what sets up our struggle—being a new creation in Christ, but still living in our old sinful body. Read Romans 7:1-6; in these verses, Paul uses marriage to illustrate a point. What is it?
3. In Romans 7:7-8, what is the question that Paul is asking, and why is he asking it?
4. In Romans 7:9-13 Paul is showing us that even though the Law was given to give it life it actually brought death. Can you explain this?
5. Paul now discusses on a very personal nature his struggle between wanting to do what is good and right, vs. his sinful nature of wanting to do what is sinful and unlawful. Read, Romans 7:14-20. What are some of the shortcomings that Paul admits to in this passage?

6. What did Paul conclude in Romans 7:21-25?

7. Our hope is in Christ in this great struggle. Read Philippians 3:20-21. How do these verses apply to our study in this lesson?

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In summary then, Paul is telling us in a very personal way about his struggle with sin; a struggle that is happening even though he is a new creature in Christ and dead to the Law. He gives us a very personal look into the life of a person who at one time was a "Pharisee of Pharisees"—a very devout follower of the Law. We see him as a person trying to be very righteous and yet falling short. He realized that within him was a struggle between his old sinful nature and the new life that he now had in Christ.

Clearly, all of us have this struggle as well. It should not be something that defeats us, or becomes an excuse for us. It is a struggle that we all must fight; and like Paul, it is a struggle which will at times seem very frustrating and even devastating, as we try to live a life that glorifies Christ. Paul reassures us that Christ will rescue us from that struggle and that a better day is coming, when we are resurrected in our new bodies to live eternally with Jesus. What a day of rejoicing that will be!

May He richly bless you as you study His Holy Word this week.

In Christ,

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