

Romans 7: Understanding the Struggle With Sin

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Romans / Romans 7

Introduction

- <https://www.foxnews.com/food-drink/man-ate-1000-sardines-month-lost-6-pounds-smelled-like-fish-market> - Man going to an extreme to lose weight, be healthy, etc. Extreme effort for extreme change.
- You're thinking about the new year and goals for 2026. Maybe it's a new health goal. Maybe this year is the year you get out of debt, or the year you declutter your house.
- Do you feel frustrated when you don't meet your goals?
- Are you frustrated when you don't meet your spiritual goals?
- Progress in our faith comes slowly, especially when you consider there's a war going on within you.
- Peter writes, "...abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul" ([1 Peter 2:11](#)).
- You feel the war daily. Temptation is strong. You want to let the anger take over instead of being self-controlled. You want to engage in that conversation that you know is gossipy. You want to stretch the truth to make yourself look more successful than you really are. You want to use ChatGPT to get your homework done instead of doing the work yourself.
- You might feel like you're constantly stuck in the struggle rather than seeing real progress in your faith. It seems like all your effort gets you nowhere (church attendance, ministry involvement, accountability groups, etc.)

- Paul told us in [Romans 6](#) that we're dead to sin - it does not rule us. BUT sin feels very much alive in us. It's frustrating, and Paul knows the frustration.
- [Romans 7](#) - Paul wrestles with this tension - and shows us three essentials we must understand about the struggle if we are going to grow in our walk with the Lord.

You need to understand whether you are living under the law or under Christ.

- [Romans 6](#) - We're dead to sin and alive to Christ. That's our position before God now. Now, God is sanctifying us so that what is true of us positionally becomes true of us practically.
- What is positionally true of us becomes practically true as we constantly remember who we belong to.
- vs. 1-4 - Paul reminds his readers that they don't belong to the law anymore. Paul's illustration: we were married to the law. It governed our lives - "If I keep God's rules, then I'm good with God."
- The Good News that Paul has been telling us is that we're no longer "married" to the law as the means by which we relate to God.
- Paul's point: The Law only has authority over someone while they are alive - [Romans 6](#) - you are dead... dead to the old life. And now alive to Christ. Your "marriage" to the old way is over. You belong to another - Jesus Christ. You have a new "marriage." Death has ended the old marriage - you have no obligation to the law as the standard you must live up to in an attempt to find acceptance with God.
- vs. 5-6 - Paul will elaborate in vs. 8-12, but the law didn't do what we hoped it would do. It didn't make us holy. Instead, it aroused sin. We bore the fruit of death. But now, we are married to another - Jesus - who has placed His Spirit within us. New life has been given to us ([Romans](#)

6). Our motivation has changed. We want to obey God because of what He's done for us, not because it's our way to salvation. We can now bear fruit for God because of the Spirit's work within us.

- Question you must ask: do you live under the law or under Christ? Or:
- **Do you relate to God through rules?** You relate to God through rules if:
 - You measure your spiritual progress by a scorecard. (I read my Bible this many days, prayed this many days, shared the Gospel this many days.)
 - You measure intimacy with God by a scorecard. (You feel near to God when you've scored well instead of knowing that you're always near to God because of Jesus.)
 - What's the score? You keep score at a football game but not in your relationship with God.
- **Or, do you relate to God through relationship?**
 - You obey as a response to God's love instead of an effort to earn God's love.
 - You want to KNOW God - Know His character, know His grace and mercy, know His heart, know His will .
 - When you fail you run to God instead of running away from God. You're quick to confess. You don't give up pursuing Him because you know you're already accepted by Him.
 - What's governing your life? Rules or relationship? Law or Christ?

You need to understand how God uses His commands in your life.

- You might think that Paul has a negative view of the Law, but he doesn't. (vs. 7) The Law is not evil. It's necessary. It doesn't produce salvation, but it certainly shows us our need for salvation.
- Why do you need the Law of God?
- **The law exposes our sin.** (vs. 7) Paul uses the tenth command as an example - "Do not covet." Paul didn't even realize he was guilty of coveting before he was exposed to it in the commands. The tenth command exposed a heart issue in Paul, not just a behavior.
- Think about how God's commands made you aware of sin. E.g., you were unaware of your pride until the Law showed you to love your neighbor as yourself - that takes humility! You didn't realize your idolatry (worship of career, success, etc.) until the Law told you to have no other gods before you.
- **The law exposes our proclivity towards sin.** (vs. 8) For Paul, when the Law exposed his sinful coveting, he couldn't stop coveting - the knowledge of his sin produced a coveting of every kind. (For Paul, law exposed a heart issue.)
- When we know something is wrong - we want it even more. (e.g., Adam and Eve in the garden. Or, when you see a "Keep off the grass" sign, you just want to walk on the grass.)
- **The law exposes how spiritually dead we are.** (vs. 9-11) - without the law we "feel" alive - blissfully unaware of our sin - but the law actually shows us how spiritually dead we are. God's commands don't give us life - they reveal how lifeless we are.
- **The law exposes how holy God is.** (vs. 12-13) God's Law is good because God is good. The Law shows us the truth about God while at

the same time shows us the truth about ourselves. The problem is not with the law but our sinful human condition.

- This is what God's Word does - it exposes! We need this! We can't see how desperately we need a Savior unless we see the truth about ourselves.
- Don't run away from the exposure - embrace it.
- Staci's request to not take the Christmas tree makes me want to do it. Reveals my heart - how much more does God's Word reveal my heart?
- The law exposes our sin, but exposure alone cannot free us—which leads Paul to confront our inability to defeat sin on our own. ([Hebrews 4:12-13](#))

You need to understand your inability to defeat sin on your own.

- vs. 14-25 - These vss. are debated. Is Paul talking about pre-conversion experience? Or, is he talking about his own present experience?
- A good argument for either side - I think Paul is reflecting on the struggle we all experience - He's writing in present tense.
- Bottom line: We live in the now/not yet. We're made new NOW, but we still have an old nature/sinful flesh that we're waiting for Christ to deliver us from. We're constantly wrestling, and we need God's help to live the kind of life that we know He wants us to live.
- We resonate with Paul's experience in vs. 14-25.
- Coming to faith doesn't take away the struggle with sin. It makes us MORE AWARE of the struggle.

- There's a big difference between struggling with sin and not caring about sin.
- vs. 14 - Law is spiritual - given by God - the problem isn't with the Law, it's with humanity. We're of the flesh and a slave to sin. The old nature creeps in often. Paul's describing his experience, not his identity.
- Sin does not reign over us ([Romans 6](#)). It's not our master, but we still run back to it. It feels like we're still a slave to sin even though positionally we are not.
- The old nature is not in control of you, but it's still present and active.
- The old nature is highly influenced by this broken world. The old nature still finds the emptiness of this world highly appealing.
- The old nature is enticed by the enemy. Satan is defeated, and he wants to take you down with him ([1 Peter 5:8](#)).
- vs. 15 - Evidence of a maturing disciple - still sins but hates it. The desire is to honor the Lord (evidence of salvation), but the struggle is real.
- vs. 16-17 - Paul doesn't make excuses for himself. There's a real conflict in Paul's life - and in your life as well. When we do what we do not want to do - we agree with the Law - that it's good. But, our sin is evidence of the power of indwelling sin that still remains in us.
- vs. 18-19 - Nothing good lives in me - Paul has already told us that. ([Romans 3:12](#) - None righteous, no not one...) You've felt this... An inability to do what's right. No matter how much you want to do good and how hard you try - you just can't seem to stay away from sin.
- vs. 20-23 - It's not that Paul doesn't want to do what's right. He desires to. THIS is actually evidence of salvation - you want to honor the Lord, but you struggle to honor the Lord. Evil is still present within you.

- vs. 23 - Paul has already said to not offer any parts of our body to sin... (vs. 13) - but he finds himself doing it. You do too. You feel the “war.” In your mind - you want to honor the Lord, but you keep giving yourself to sin.
- vs. 24-25 You feel like Paul, “What a wretched man I am!” NOT “What a good man I am!” (That’s what religious people like the Pharisees said.) What’s the solution? Jesus! He’s the ONE who rescues us from this wretched life and gives us a new life.
- Our effort is not the answer - but Jesus’ effort is! What Paul’s telling us - we need help. On our own, there’s no way we can overcome the sinful life. We need the rescuer!
- Paul is going to give us how we live the victorious life in a fallen world in [Romans 8](#) - but what is this passage calling us to now?
- **Be ruthlessly honest.** If Paul can be this honest, you can be too. Are you honest about the battle or do you pretend like everything’s ok? When you’re honest about the battle, you’ll confess faster. You’ll stop excusing your sin. You’ll stop defending yourself. What keeps you from honesty? Pride? Hypocrisy?
- **Let desperation characterize your life.** NOT pride. NOT self-reliance. Paul is showing us that he cannot honor God on his own. He doesn’t have the power to. He’s desperate for a rescuer. Are you? How desperate are you for a work of the Spirit in your life? Desperation is that constant posture of life: “God, I need you for everything.”
 - Try this: The place in my life where I most feel [Romans 7](#) is _____. (On the screen) THIS is where you need to desperately come before the God and say to Him, “I confess. I can’t.”
- **Learn to cry the right question.** I love how this passage ends. It doesn’t end with, “What else can I do, God” That’s the question we want to ask God. “What can I do to make you happy, God? What can I do to

feel closer to you?” The better question is always, “Who will rescue me?”

- Jesus will rescue you - that’s why He came. To rescue from sin and give you a new life. He’s the ONE who will give you victory over sin as you give your life to Him and allow Him to work in your life rather than depending on yourself. If you are not a believer, give your life to the One who came, lived, died, and rose again for you. Repent of your sins and believe in Him.
- Believer, you need to constantly ask, “God, will you rescue me?”