

The Christian Manual: Study 9, Romans 7

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: Everyone sins. And sin always brings death. Only Christians have a way out of sin and the possibility to walk in holiness and experience life. It will not always be perfect (sin is a powerful seductive enemy), but it can be real.

Chapter 7 The Fight

Section 1: Romans 7:1-3 Our Escape From The Law—Death

7 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? ²For 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. ³So 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.

Paul is writing this part to Jews. He calls them his brothers to show his solidarity with them. We never get the feeling that Paul was anything but thrilled to have been a Jew. The Jewish people were blessed with God's presence (the tabernacle and temple), His Law, His constant guidance through the prophets, and the promises he made from Adam to Malachi that a Messiah was coming.

The Jews would be very familiar with the laws regarding marriage. A wife is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. To be with another is to be an adulterous. But, if the husband dies, then the wife is free to marry another. She is free from the law regarding her first marriage. The law over marriage stops with death.



Jaqueline Kennedy was made a widow when her husband, John F. Kennedy was killed. She went on to marry Aristotle Onassis.

The Law is for the living. We all have lost people, friends or family, to the grave. We don't worry about them stealing, or killing, or committing adultery. These are all activities that are bound to this realm. Once a person leaves this realm, they are no longer subject to the Law.

Section 2: Romans 7:4-6 We May Unite with Christ

⁴So, 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. ⁵For 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. ⁶But 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.

Here Paul brings together all the metaphors. He talked about the husband that dies and frees his wife to marry another. For the first part, we are the husband who died. We died with Christ when we placed our faith in Him.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

We can all say this. I have died with Christ. I am dead. Dead people are free from the Law because the Law is only for the living. One of the problems we have as Christians is that we want to hold on to our lives. But, in Christ we have died. We are dead. We have joined Him in death.

This is not the end of the story. We have also joined Christ in His resurrection. The life we now live is His life in us.

And now another metaphor: we are the bride. We are free to be joined to another. We are joined to Christ. He is the bridegroom and we are the bride.

And what is the purpose of this? It is that we might bear fruit for God. What is this fruit and where does it come from? Jesus explained in John 15 that He was the vine and we were the branches. When connected to Him, we would bear fruit. In Galatians 5 Paul describes this fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. So, let's put this all together. We have died with Christ, so we are no longer under the Law. We are united with Jesus' resurrection so that we might, through His Spirit within us, bear fruit. The point of all this is that the fruit does not come from us. It is the by-product of being joined to Christ and having His Spirit flowing through us.

We've been producing a very different fruit in Adam. In our old lives, our lives in the flesh, the Law would incite rebellion within us. We sometimes broke the law just to break the law.

In his Confessions (2.IV) Augustine recalls a time when he was young when he and some friends stole pears from an orchard. The pears weren't ripe and they didn't even want them. They stole them for the excitement of breaking the law.

The flesh produces fruit. The fruit is death. The fruit of death is everything that separates us from God, everything that pushes us to pride, selfishness, independence, self-righteousness, etc. It is us feeding our appetites, seeking nothing but our own pleasure or safety above the Kingdom of God. It is putting ourselves in the center of our lives.

But now, in Christ, we have died and are free from the Law and from the fruit of death. United to Christ, His death and resurrection are ours. By the Spirit within us we can now bear the fruit of life, the fruit which unites us with God the Father, that puts all things back the way they really are—with God on His throne exalted in the heavens, with a name above all names.

Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, "The Scriptures do not counsel us to "reckon" the nature to be dead; it urges us to "reckon" ourselves to be dead unto *it*."¹

¹ *He That is Spiritual*, pg. 131

Section 3: Romans 7:7-12 The Way of Sin

⁷What 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."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.⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Paul now falls back to his question/answer style, anticipating what his audience will ask. These questions were probably asked by Jews in synagogues across the Middle East.

The first question is, "Is the Law sinful?"

There are three separate parts interacting in this section. Each has particular characteristics. First, there is the Law. The Law is holy,

righteous, and good. The Law is perfectly aligned with the character of God Who gave it. The Law is not a bad thing, it is a beautiful thing. A perfect person would live the Law. Jesus did not break the Law, but fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17). There are three weaknesses with the law. A. W. Tozer lists them as 1) It could not cancel past sins—that is, it could not justify, 2) It could not make dead men live—that is, it could not regenerate, 3) It could not make bad hearts good—that is, it could not sanctify.²

The second part is sin. Sin is a force within each individual. It is personified here as an enemy that seizes opportunity given by the presence of the Law to produce all kinds of sin. It is the Law that gives sin its vibrancy, its power. When the individual follows the influence of sin, death follows. Sin separates us from God. Sin is deceptive. It lies to us. It tells us that we deserve what we do not. It encourages us, saying that sinful activity will satisfy us. It manipulates us to believe that our sin will not hurt anyone, including us. Sin is something like a personal demon within.

The third part is the person who stands before the Law. This is a person with sin within. The person chooses and puts himself or herself under the authority of the Law or of the indwelling sin. But it is sin that wins and the person dies spiritually.

This section of Scripture will open our eyes to the insidiousness of sin. In our day we rarely even hear about sin. Sin is considered an

² *Paths to Power*, pg. 30

old-fashioned concept that is only used in religion. The reality is that sin is real. It is the thing that has destroyed us. “It was sin that brought the ruin of the race; it was sin that brought the Savior to die on the cross; it is sin that has filled every jail and hospital and insane asylum. It is sin that has made every murder and every divorce and every crime that has been committed since the world began. In the presence of this awful, holy God, it can never be anything but a devious deformity.”³ We need to counter the world’s explanations for our current social ills. They would say that alcoholism is a disease, that homosexuals are born this way, that criminals are a product of their environment, etc. Christians need to declare with one voice that all social and personal ills have a common source—sin. Sin has separated us from God. It works within us to produce death. It is the great malady that has only one solution.

Section 4: Romans 7:13-25 The Mind Versus the Flesh

¹³ 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.

³ A. W. Tozer, *Voice of the Prophet*, pg. 169.

¹⁴We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸For 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. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰Now 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.

²¹So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but 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. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵Thanks 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.

How do we know if what we are doing is sin? It's pretty easy. Just ask yourself, would Jesus do this? The things He would do are okay. Things He would not do are sin.

Consider your habits of sin, whatever they are. Your sin might be gossip or backbiting. You may talk incessantly about yourself, putting yourself into the center of all things, bragging or boasting. Your sin might be sexual in nature (there are many of these). You could be toying with behaviors that might become habits like drinking or smoking or taking drugs. You might be lifting entertainment or social media to the place of God in your life. Unfortunately, because these behaviors are so common they are not even seen for what they are—sin.

Now, just try to change your habits. Put away the pornography and clean your mind. Get control of your tongue. Put away the game controller and smart phone. Live a life centered on God, just try. What will happen? When we recognize our sin and attempt to do something about it, then the battle begins. When the flesh, our old nature outside of Christ, begins to lose its hold on us, it rises up and does everything it can to again seize control again. Then the battle rages within us, the same battle we see Paul describing here.

Why don't we feel this battle every day? Probably because we have surrendered to the flesh. The flesh doesn't have to fight for control, because we have gladly surrendered our lives to it and are doing its bidding. We have compromised to the point that there is nothing

significantly different between our lives and the lives of the unsaved around us. Their sin is our sin; their habits our habits.

God calls us to this struggle. He calls us to fight this battle within and not to simply surrender to the flesh and give it supremacy in our lives.

Our way of deliverance has been provided by God. The way is Jesus. His death is my death. This frees me from the Law and breaks sin's power over me. His resurrection into new life is my resurrection. Now I have the possibility of walking in righteousness and holiness. The key is choice.

Try this. When you wake up in the morning, come before God. Confess your sin and receive His cleansing. Claim the death and resurrection of Jesus as yours. Worship God, exalting Him to the place of lordship over your life and your choices. Ask the Spirit to help you live this day as a son or daughter of God. Read the Word and bathe your mind in the truth. This way you will clothe yourself with Christ. During the day, live before God, in His presence. Pray throughout the day. Worship constantly. Ask God to fill your day with divine appointments where you can demonstrate righteousness and love to your Oikos and to all people you meet. When you do this, you live a fulfilling Godly life. The flesh is always there, but it is overcome when we clothe ourselves with Christ.

Romans 13:12-14 says, ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather, clothe

yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Paul ends this section with a cry—Who will free me from the body of this death? This image may come from Virgil's Aeneid. It refers to a severe punishment used by an evil king.

He even tied corpses to living bodies, as a means of torture, placing hand on hand and face against face, so killing by a lingering death, in that wretched embrace, that ooze of disease and decomposition. (Book 7)

This is the true picture of sin. Sin is a rotting corpse. Sin carries with it the stench of death. When we deal with sin realistically, it will turn our stomach. We will join Paul in calling for freedom. Praise God that we do have the possibility of freedom through Christ. We can be free from this death.

At this time I am a divided man. My old Adamic nature, my flesh, is enslaved to sin. But in my mind I serve God's perfect and holy Law. The difference is that now I have a choice. I can overcome the flesh by the Spirit within me. I must give myself to God moment by moment so that His life will shine through me.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Whatever became of sin? This was the title of a book by Karl Menninger in 1988. Mr. Menninger explained that the word sin was rarely, if ever, used anymore, but people still walked around with a deep sense of guilt. If anything, thirty years later, this situation has gotten much worse.

By moving away from recognizing sin, we have allowed it to become an invisible enemy. We have granted it permission to rule us and our culture. Just look around. Consider the homeless, the aimless, the depressed, those who abuse their children or spouses, those who divorce, who declare war. Consider those who torture and rape and murder. Consider the gangs and drug addicts and drunkards in our society. We have to admit, for all our technological advancement and in spite of the recent explosion in knowledge, we have not moved forward one inch when it comes to morality.

We know that relationships of love and mutual respect are ideal. We know that people who respect others and their property are needed to build a society. We know that being good is far more positive and productive than being bad. And yet, our society drowns in crime, hate, and hopelessness.

So, if we know this, why do people live sinful lives? Sin dwells inside us, like an embedded enemy. It permeates our bodies and our flesh (our human nature inherited from Adam). Those outside of Christ have no choice but to sin. Sin manipulates them. It separates them from God. It keeps them away from Him, lest they repent and be saved.



CONNECT: Icebreaker

GAME: BLAMESHIFTING

Get enough thin paper plates for each student to have one. Cut eye holes in the plates. On the inside of the plate, write different sins: Lying, cheating, gossip, adultery, betrayal, stealing, bullying, drunkenness, homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, divorce, murder, loving money, etc.

Tell the students: You are going to be given a mask with a word written inside. Don't show it to anyone else. Come up with a rationale which would explain why a person would perform this activity. Try to make it convincing.

One-by-one each students and leaders who want to will explain their scenario and excuses for this behavior. The rest of the group, still wearing their masks, will try to guess what the behavior is that the person is defending.

When this is all over, explain to the students that this is how people live in our world—making rationalizations for their behavior. These things are all sin and lead to death in our relationship with God and with each other. But in our world we have lost all sense of sin.



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 7:1-3

The Law of God is for the living. When a person dies, they are no longer subject to the Law of God. When a husband dies, the wife is free to marry another. The Law ends at death. We don't ask dead people to obey the Law. They're dead.

Section 2 Romans 7:4-6

In Christ we are the dead husband and the wife who is free to marry another. Jesus' death is our death. This frees us from bondage to the Law. Jesus' resurrection is our new life which allows us to be wed to Him. Marriage brings children. Because of sin, the marriage to the Law gave children of death. Because we are now married to Christ we can bear children of eternal life.

Section 3 Romans 7:7-12

The Law itself is not sinful. The Law brought sin to light. It exposed it for what it was. Without the Law, sin hides in the shadows, invisible. The Law came and showed it to be what it was—rebellion to God.

Section 3 Romans 7:13-25

In our old lives, in our old sinful self, we couldn't help but sin. Sin was active within us making us do things for which we were ashamed. But now, in Christ, we can walk in Him and His holiness. Sin will continue to dwell within us in this life, like a dead body chained to us, but we do not have to give into it. We can proclaim our death in Christ and walk by the Spirit in His life.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 7:1-3

1. Paul is building an argument in this chapter. What is his first point?
2. Often when a person is dead, they still receive bills. Is it reasonable to expect anything from those who have passed away?

Section 2 Read Romans 7:4-6

1. What is sin? How does God feel about it? What does sin bring into our lives?
2. How is Christ's death relevant to our lives today and our relationship to sin?
3. How can we bear the fruit of God?

Section 3 Read Romans 7:7-12

1. What is the purpose of the Law? What does it expose? How does it do this?

Section 4 Read Romans 7:13-25

1. How is the Christian individual now divided within himself? How does a Christian walk in holiness and not in sin?
2. What does Paul compare sin to? Why would he use such a disgusting metaphor?



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

Being good takes horrible effort. Think about that. We were created to be like God, holy and good. But being good is exhausting. It is like walking up a steep mountain. Why? Why should it be so difficult to walk according to our original created nature?

We're all the same—people created in the image of God infused with sin, inherited from our common father, Adam. This explains our total selfishness, our lustful eyes, our constant pride, and our insatiable appetites. Even when we try to be good, our actions are infused with selfishness.

Before Christ, this was our plight. It was all we had. But now everything has changed. Because of Christ I am united with His death. I died. I was crucified with Him in baptism. Because of this I can think of myself as dead to sin. Paul admonishes us:

Romans 6:11: In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:3: For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When we count ourselves dead to sin (and we should do this often) we are able to live in Christ. We can enter God's presence in prayer and worship. The Holy Spirit will replace sin as an influence and will empower us to do the work of God and to have his glorious fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). We will finally fulfill our destiny and become the image of God. Do this now. Quit fighting sin. You will not win. Rather cut down the tree and the fruit will fall, then walk in Christ.

Big Idea: In Christ, I can stop sinning whenever I want to.

“Not everyone, by any means, has had the experience of the seventh of Romans, that agony of conflict, of desire to do what we cannot do, of longing to do the right we find we cannot do. It is a great blessing when a person gets into the seventh of Romans and begins to realize the awful conflict of its struggle and defeat; because the first step toward getting out of the struggle of the seventh chapter and into the victory of the eighth is to get into the seventh. Of all the needy classes of people, the neediest of this earth are not those who are having a heartbreaking, agonizing struggle for victory, but those who are having no struggle at all, and no victory, and who do not know it, and who are satisfied and jogging along in a pitiable absence of almost all the possessions that belong to them in Christ.”⁴

⁴ Dr. C. I. Scofield, in *The Green Letters*, by Miles Sanford, pgs. 54-55