



ROMANS 6:1-7:25
THE STRUGGLE
WITH SIN

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ROMANS 1-5 REVIEW

READ

Go back and read Romans 1-5 before meeting together as a group. It may be helpful to review some of our past lessons as well to refresh your memory.

ROMANS 1

- In your own words, what is the main point of Romans 1?

- What is natural man's response to God and His revelation?

ROMANS 2

- In your own words, what is the main point of Romans 2?

- What does the Law reveal about mankind?

ROMANS 3

- In your own words, what is the main point of Romans 3?

- What has God done to deal with the sin of both Jew and Gentile?

ROMANS 4

- In your own words, what is the main point of Romans 4?

- Why does Paul mention Abraham? Who are Abraham's true children?

ROMANS 5

- In your own words, what is the main point of Romans 5?

- Explain Jesus's role and work as the Second Adam.

LOOKING AHEAD...

Paul has spent the first five chapters unpacking the Gospel and the work of Jesus for us, but he is not finished yet. As Paul ends Romans 5, he describes how a change has occurred in the relationship of the believer to sin. Romans 6-7 are a further explanation of that relationship and of the reality of how that change has actually affected our lives as believers.

ROMANS 6:1-4- OUR BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

OBSERVE

1. According to Paul, should we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2. What have we "died to"?

3. Who and what have we been baptized into?

4. Who were we buried with in baptism?

5. What happened to Christ after He died?

6. What was the purpose of our dying with Christ, according to v. 4?

LEARN

- Paul uses several rhetorical questions in this passage. By examining these rhetorical questions, we can gain more insight into the situations Paul was addressing in Rome as well as the areas where the Roman church was struggling in their knowledge and/or practice of the Christian life.
- One heretical idea Paul is combatting here is called "antinomianism." This word describes a perspective that since Christians are justified and saved, obedience to God's Law is not important at all; since Christians are saved by grace, the Law no longer plays a role in the Christian life.
- In v. 1, Paul is not so much describing continuing to commit individual sins, but more so remaining in a state of being under the dominance of sin.

THINK

1. Explain why someone might think Christians are permitted to continue in sin, according to v. 1. Is this a correct way of thinking? Why or why not?

2. What kind of baptism (water or Spirit) do you think Paul is describing here? Explain.

3. Does Paul seem to assume that everyone in the Roman church has been baptized? What is the significance of this?

4. Is Paul stating that baptism is what causes us to be united with Christ? Explain.

5. What kind of "death" is Paul describing in v. 3?

6. What is the "newness of life" that Paul mentions in v. 4?

7. What is the connection between the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and our salvation at this point in redemptive history?

APPLY

- Consider what the calling of believers is as a result of their regeneration: walking in "newness of life." Are there areas where you tend to struggle to walk in "newness of life"? Ask God for His help, and spend time thinking about how Christ has freed you from sin's dominance.

ROMANS 6:5-11- DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO GOD

OBSERVE

1. What have we been united with Christ in?

2. What was crucified with Him, and why?

3. What did Christ die to? What does He live to?

4. How should we consider ourselves, according to v. 11?

5. Through whom are we dead to sin and alive to God, according to v. 11?

6. How many times does the phrase "with him" occur?

LEARN

- This passage lays the groundwork for the fundamental doctrine of union with Christ. Union with Christ is a very broad subject, but in the context of this passage, Paul describes how we have been spiritually united with Christ, and as a result, have become partakers of the applied blessings of salvation that are in Him.
- The word "consider" in v. 11 describes "the act of believing or holding a particular view with regard to something as the result of logical reasoning."¹ In other words, believers are to be conscious and clear in their thinking about their new relationship to God and sin.

¹ Aaron C. Fenslon, "[Belief](#)," ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

THINK

1. On what does Paul base his certainty of the resurrection for believers?

2. Is Paul speaking of a spiritual resurrection for the Christian here, or the future bodily resurrection? Explain your answer.

3. What is the "old self" Paul is referring to? Use cross references to explain and support your answer.

4. If we have died with Christ, what is our new relationship to sin?

5. Why is it that death has no dominion over Christ? Use cross references to support your answer.

6. How is it possible that Christ died "to sin" without having ever committed sin Himself?

7. Read Ephesians 2:1-3. Explain how Romans 6:11 is a reversal of our spiritual state prior to being born again.

APPLY

- How often do you consider your new relationship to sin and to God? How do you think your life and struggles might be affected if you gave more conscious thought to these new realities?

ROMANS 6:12-14 - SIN WILL HAVE NO DOMINION

OBSERVE

1. What are the prohibitions in this passage?

2. What is the result of letting sin reign in our mortal bodies?

3. Who should believers present themselves to?

4. According to v. 13, who are we?

5. What should believers present to God, and for what purpose?

6. Will sin have dominion over believers anymore? Why or why not?

LEARN

- Paul has spent the first five chapters of Romans talking about the “indicatives” of the Gospel. Indicatives describe statements of fact or reality; in other words, Paul has been describing what God has done to save us. The first “imperative” comes in v. 11. Imperatives are commands or instructions. Another way we could think about this is that indicatives are related to our justification (what God has done for us) while imperatives are related to our sanctification (our response of obedience resulting from our salvation). Notice how Paul makes sure to lay a very strong Gospel foundation for the instructions he is now giving the Romans; to have imperatives without the indicatives is to risk legalism.
- The “mortal body” Paul refers to includes our physical body, but it is more than that: “‘The mortal body’ is the believer’s form of existence in this world and still has part in ‘this age.’”
- “Instrument” also refers to tools or weapons; in other words, it is a device used to accomplish a purpose.

THINK

1. Does sin reign in us and have domination over us prior to being Christians? Use cross references to support your answer.

2. How is it possible that Paul tells believers that they have a choice in letting sin reign or not? Explain.

3. Practically speaking, what does Paul mean when he tells the Romans not to present themselves to sin for unrighteousness?

4. Consider v. 13; what are the masters that a Christian can serve? How many are there?

5. Explain how the resurrection changes how we should live, according to v. 13.

6. Take a minute to review Romans 3:19-4:12. What does Paul mean by being “under the law”? Does this mean that as Christians we don’t need to worry about obeying God’s commands?

7. In light of your answer to #6, what does Paul mean by being “under grace”?

APPLY

- Paul gives us clear instructions for the fight against sin, which are grounded in the good news of Christ’s death and life for us. How often do you think about the one to whom you are presenting yourself: God for righteousness or sin for unrighteousness?

ROMANS 6:15-19 - SLAVES TO SIN OR SANCTIFICATION

OBSERVE

1. According to Paul, should we sin since we are not “under law but under grace”?

2. What happens when we present ourselves to anyone as an “obedient slave”?

3. What are the two possible masters, according to v. 16?

4. What has happened to the believer, according to v. 17?-18?

5. What did we once present our members to? What did this lead to?

6. What *should* we not present our members to? What does this lead to?

LEARN

- “Sanctification” is an important biblical word and concept that in essence means “to be holy” or “set apart” There are two main categories of sanctification: *positional sanctification* (in which we are declared holy by God in terms of our standing; e.g. Hebrews 10:10) and *progressive sanctification* (in which we grow in holiness as we put sin to death and become more like Christ in the way we actually live; e.g. 1 Thess 5:23).
- Christians have debated about the role of “free will” in salvation for centuries. However, an often overlooked aspect to the discussion is the way that man’s nature is described in here in Romans 6 in terms of being enslaved to sin. As Martin Luther said in his dialogue with the Catholic philosopher Erasmus (who advocated for a strong “free will” position): **“For if man has lost his freedom, and is forced to serve sin, and cannot will good, what conclusion can more justly be drawn concerning him, than that he sins and wills evil by necessity?”**²
- Paul uses what is called a “divine passive” in v. 17 when he describes that the Romans have “become obedient from the heart.” Grammatically, this means that God is the one who made them obedient from the heart, not themselves.

² Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 149.

- The 1689 London Baptist Confession addresses the topic of human will and God’s sovereignty helpfully: **When God converts sinners and transforms them into the state of grace, he frees them from their natural bondage to sin and by his grace alone enables them to will and to do freely what is spiritually good. Yet because of their remaining corruption, they do not perfectly nor exclusively will what is good but also will what is evil...Only in the state of glory is the will made perfectly and unchangeably free toward good alone.**³

THINK

1. Do slaves follow their own will or the will of their master? Explain the importance of this for Paul’s argument here.

2. Read Ephesians 2:1-10 and Titus 3:3-7. Keeping in mind what we also read in Romans, prior to being regenerated did we have *moral* or *spiritual* freedom? Explain.

3. Based on these biblical texts, can an unregenerate person, enslaved to sin, choose to love and obey God? According to these passages, *will* they? Explain and support your answer using *biblical texts*, not speculation.

4. If people are either a slave to sin or a slave to God, how should we understand human freedom? Explain your answer.

5. In what way have believers been set free from sin? What does this mean for our daily life?

APPLY

- If people were to examine your life, who would they think your master was: sin or God? If you examine your own life, who does it appear your master is?
- Take time in prayer to thank God for His gracious and sovereign work of regeneration in causing you to become obedient from the heart to the truth of His Word.

³ 2nd London Baptist Confession of 1689, Chapter 9, paragraphs 4-5

ROMANS 6:20-23 - THE FRUIT OF SANCTIFICATION

OBSERVE

1. Were we once slaves to sin?

2. When we were slaves to sin, what were we free in regard to?

3. According to v. 21, how should believers view the things they used to do?

4. What have believers been set free from? Who have believers become slaves of?

5. What is the end of sanctification?

6. What are the wages of sin?

7. What is the free gift of God? In whom is this gift found?

THINK

1. What does Paul mean when he says that, while slaves to sin, we were "free in regards to righteousness" in v. 20?

2. Read Galatians 5:16-26. What does Paul mean when he describes the "fruit" we got both prior to and after salvation?

3. What is Paul referring to when he speaks of the “things of which you are now ashamed”?

4. How has God set us free from sin?

5. According to v. 22, does being a slave of God bring out change in our life? Explain.

6. According to Paul, the end of sanctification (the destination at the end of the road, to speak figuratively) is eternal life. Does this mean that we earn our salvation through sanctification? Explain.

7. How does sin earn us death?

8. Paul uses the word “wages” to describe the effects of sin and the word “gift” to describe eternal life. Why is this choice of words significant?

APPLY

- Paul’s main point in this passage is to help believers understand that their identity and their master has changed; why would they want to serve sin and harvest its rotten fruit any longer? Take a moment to reflect on how much better the gift of God in Christ is, and how that should affect the way you live for Him.

ROMANS 7 OVERVIEW

Romans 7 (especially v. 7-25) is a notoriously controversial chapter, and interpreters debate and differ on the best way to understand what Paul says. The purpose of this lesson is to get a big picture of Romans 7 before taking the smaller chunks so that we don't lose the theological forest for the trees.

1. Write down the words that you see repeated frequently in this chapter:

- _____ How many times? _____
- _____ How many times? _____
- _____ How many times? _____
- _____ How many times? _____
- _____ How many times? _____
- _____ How many times? _____

2. As you read through this chapter, does it seem like Paul takes a positive or negative view of the Law? Explain.

There are three main interpretations of Romans 7 that it is helpful to be familiar with:

1. **The "Preconversion View"** - This view states that Paul is talking about his struggle with sin from the perspective of his experience prior to being born again.

- What verses in this chapter support this view?

2. **The "Postconversion View"** - This view states that Paul's struggle with sin is his experience after becoming born again.

- What verses in this chapter support this view?

3. **The "Generalized View"** - This view states that Paul is not necessarily speaking of his own individual experience, but rather the general way that the the law of God and sin interact in fallen humans (e.g. Adam, Israel, etc); n other words, how the Law incites sin in fallen man.

- What verses in this chapter support this view?

ROMANS 7:1-6 - RELEASED FROM THE LAW

OBSERVE

1. Who is Paul speaking to, according to v. 1?

2. What is the relationship between the law and a person? For how long?

3. What binds a husband and a wife together, according to v. 2?

4. How can a spouse be released from the marriage, biblically?

5. What is the relationship of believers to the law, according to v. 4?

6. How has this been accomplished? For what purpose?

7. What did man's sinful flesh do in response to the law, according to v. 5?

8. In what way does Paul say the Romans now serve?

LEARN

- The 1689 2nd London Baptist Confession provides some helpful insight on the role of the Law in the life of the believer: **"True believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be justified or condemned by it. Yet it is very useful to them and to others as a rule of life that informs them of the will of God and their duty. It directs and obligates them to live according to its precepts. It also exposes the sinful corruptions of their natures, hearts, and lives. As they examine themselves in light of the law, they come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of sin, along with a clearer view of their need for Christ and the perfection of his obedience. The law is also useful to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions because it forbids sin..."**⁴

⁴ Ch 19.6

THINK

1. Who do you think Paul is referring to as "those who know the law"? Why might this be significant in light of the whole passage?

2. What is the point Paul is trying to convey with the use of a marriage analogy in v. 1-3?

3. What does Paul mean when he says that believers have "died to the law"?

4. What is the significance of the phrase "belong to another" (v.4) in light of v.1-3?

5. Explain why, before a person is regenerated, the Law cannot produce "fruit for God"?

6. Read v. 6 slowly and carefully, then read Galatians 3:21-29. In what way are believers "released from the Law"? In terms of our justification? Our obedience? Explain.

7. Read Galatians 5:16-18. When Paul writes that we no longer serve in the "old way," what do you think he is referring to in connection with the Law?

ROMANS 7:7-12 - SIN AND THE LAW PT I

OBSERVE

1. Is the Law sin?

2. Did the Law result in Paul knowing sin?

3. Through what did sin seize an opportunity? What this this produce?

4. What is the state of sin, apart from the law?

5. What made sin come alive? What happened to Paul when sin came alive?

6. What did the commandment seem to promise? What did it result in?

7. What did sin do through the commandment, according to v. 11?

8. According to v. 12, how does Paul describe the Law and the commandments of the Law?

LEARN

- Paul speaks of sin here anthropomorphically, in such a way that suggests that sin is sentient and purposeful. However, this is merely a literary device that Paul uses to describe the way that our sinful nature reacts to the Law.
- As Christians, we use the term "sin" often, but it's helpful to define it. The Westminster Larger Catechism defines sin as "Sin is any want [lack] of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable [rational] creature."
- Many Christians view the Law as a negative thing, but pay careful attention to where the problem lies in these verses.

THINK

1. What is the "law" Paul is referring to? Does this refer to a specific set of laws given to a group of people or a general principle? Explain.

2. In what way does the Law cause us to know sin?

3. Where does Paul locate sin in these verses; outside of us or inside of us? Why is that significant for understanding this passage?

4. Given the above definition of sin, why is the concept of sin inseparably connected to God's Law?

5. In what way does the commandment "promise life"?

6. In what way does sin in response to the Law bring death?

7. Why is v. 12 so important to a right and balanced understanding of the Law? What is the danger that v. 12 corrects?

APPLY

- In what ways have you seen your own sinful nature respond to God's Law how Paul describes? Do you find that this continues even as a Christian?

ROMANS 7:13-20 - SIN AND THE LAW PT II

OBSERVE

1. Did what is good bring death to Paul?

2. What did bring death to Paul?

3. What happens to sin through the commandment?

4. How does Paul describe the law in v. 14?

5. How does Paul describe himself in v. 14?

6. What does Paul do/not do according to v. 15-20?

7. Who does Paul attribute sinful actions to in v. 17-20?

8. Does anything good dwell in Paul's flesh?

LEARN

- When Paul states that nothing good dwells in his flesh, he is not referring to only his physical body. Paul uses the flesh to describe the fallen aspect of human nature in many different parts of his letters (e.g. 1 Cor 5:5, Gal 5:13ff, etc).

THINK

1. What does the Law serve to do, according to these verses?

2. In what way does sin produce death in man through what is good?

3. What do you think Paul means when he says that sin became “sinful beyond measure”?

4. In what way is the Law “spiritual”? Why does this present a problem for the one who is “of the flesh”?

5. For what reason does Paul say he doesn’t understand his own actions?

6. Can an unregenerate person “want to do” God’s Law or “desire to do what is right”? At the same time, do regenerated believers have the ability to “carry out” what is right? Explain how. 15 affects your understanding of this passage as a whole.

7. Why does Paul make a separation between himself and the sin that dwells in him?

APPLY

- Can you relate to Paul’s description in this passage? Do you find that you struggle with sin? When you consider your own dealings with your sinful nature, what is your usual response?

ROMANS 7:21-25- THE LAW AT WAR

OBSERVE

1. What word does Paul use to describe his struggle with sin in v. 21?

2. What is always lying close at hand when Paul wants to do right?

3. How does Paul view the Law in v. 22?

4. Where does Paul delight in the Law of God?

5. What is operating in Paul's members?

6. What does the other law do to Paul, according to v. 23?

7. How does Paul describe himself in v. 24?

8. Who does Paul give thanks to in v. 25?

9. What does Paul serve with his mind? With his flesh?

LEARN

- Paul begins v. 21 with a Greek conjunction *ara*, which indicates that v. 21-23 are a summary of the preceding verses of Romans 7. Paul also uses essentially the same phrase in v. 25 to summarize the preceding verses.

THINK

1. Read Genesis 4:1-7. Why do you think Paul uses the term "law" to describe the constant danger of sin nearby?

2. What kind of person would “delight in the Law of God,” as Paul says in v. 22? How does this affect your understanding of who this passage speaks of?

3. Look at the cross references for the second part of v. 22. What is the “inner being” Paul refers to here? In contrast, what are the “members” that Paul mentions in v. 23?

4. What are the two forces at work in Paul, according to these verses? Are these forces descriptive of a believer or a unbeliever? Explain.

5. Why do you think Paul asks the question that we find in v. 24? What does he see as his ultimate need?

6. Explain the relationship between v. 24 and v. 25.

7. How does Jesus deliver us from “this body of death”?

APPLY

- When you struggle with sin, how do you tend to respond? Do you find yourself in despair? How does Paul’s response in v. 24 show you who you to turn to in your struggle with sin?