



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 70 Sin on a Saint! Romans 7:18-25

Romans 7:14-25, *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ²⁰Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ²¹I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²²For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Does the dead man bother carrying a weight?

If a saint feels the pressure of sin, then he or she is alive in Christ.

A true Christian feels sensitive to sin and hates the evil that is in him. Seeks not to fill up his life with sin under grace, but rather seeks to empty his life of sin.

The redeemed man who longs for the understanding of the Word of God, fulfilment of the Word of God, and who hates every false way.

There is a struggle for the believer to live a holy life.
The struggle is presented to us here in Romans chapter 7.

Paul is trying to demonstrate that because he preaches salvation by grace through faith does not mean that he sees no place for the law. That is not to say to Jews who esteem the law that he does not esteem it.

Paul is simply giving it its proper function that the law is not to save people, or to sanctify people, but to convict them of sin.

Even as a believer the law continues to have the function of demonstrating to the Christian the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

When Paul sees the law of God, which his heart longs to fulfil, and in comparison, sees the sin in his life, he loves the law and loathes the sin.

Last week we saw how Paul was taking this subject personally by pointing out over 49 times addressing as I, me, and myself.

This is the testimony of Paul as well as ours too. The testimony of his own struggle spiritually with indwelling sin is given in three laments.

There are three laments, and they all three basically say the same thing.

- He laments his situation.
- He weeps over it.
- He sorrows over it.
- His heart is grieved over it.
- He is broken over it.

Each of these three laments follows the same pattern.

- 1. Condition,**
- 2. Proof, and**
- 3. Source.**

Paul describes his condition, gives the proof that he is in that condition, and then the source of his problem.

**First lament, Verses 14-17,
Second lament, Verses 18-19,
Third lament, Verses 20-25.**

The law of God is spiritual, but we are carnal.

Here Paul is looking at the battle and his humanness. He is not talking about all that is renewed in him.

He finds himself sold under sin.

V 23, *“brought into captivity to the law of sin which is operating in his members.”*

He finds himself still being victimized by sin, even though he has been redeemed. This is his condition, condition of struggle.

Philippians 3:12-14, *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

What Paul is saying is this that I know I haven't reached there yet.

Romans 7 is a recognition of what he isn't. It's a perspective.

It is a non-technical view. It is a perspective.

It is the same perspective that made Paul say, "*I am chief of sinners,*" **1 Timothy 1:15**.

It is an understanding of the pure, holy, just, good law of God. When you see yourself against that law, you are very much aware of how sinful you are.

When you see a Christian and they appear to be very content with where they are spiritually. They want to make sure you know how holy they are, but rather indeed they don't understand the Word of God. That is evidence not of their holiness, but evidence of their ignorance of God's holy law.

For the better we understand the infinite perfection of God's holy law, the better we will understand our own imperfection.

What we have in Romans chapter 7 is not only the testimony of a Christian, but a very mature one and a very spiritually minded one.

Condition in verse 14,

Proof in verse 15,

Source is verse 16 and 17.

The proof that I am still carnal, and I am frustrated because I see the infinite glory of God's law, holiness of His standard, and I can't live up to that standard.

That is a very mature perspective. It's a very immature thing to think you have really arrived spiritually.

Instead of congratulating ourselves about how holy we are, if we really understand God's law, we are going to see ourselves as falling far short.

That is why again takes us back to the brokenness.

My condition is I am in a struggle.

The proof of it is that I can't always do what I want and do sometimes what I really don't want in my deepest self.

The source of it all is sin that is in me.

The conflict in the life of a believer is a conflict between a new creation which is holy, which is created for eternity, which is the eternal seed, which cannot sin that is in you.

The conflict is between that redeemed you and your unredeemed mortality.

Every child of God who really is walking in obedience with the mind of the Saviour laments the reality of his sin.

1 John 1:8-10, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

Psalm 38:18, *For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.*

Psalm 97:10, *You who love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.*

Regenerated person hates sin and faces the fact that even though he has been recreated and there is a new nature there, in humanness there is sin and therein lies the struggle.

So even though we are redeemed, sin hangs on in our flesh, our mortality, our unredeemed humanity.

This disallows us from seeing fulfilment of the deep heart longing that pants after the perfection of God's law.

Sometimes this doesn't only show up before you sin, but it shows up afterward, and it shows up in your guilt, and your sense of sorrow, and your sense of contrition.

Second lament:

V 18, *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

The pattern here is identical.

Condition.

Paul gets technical. He doesn't want us to lose the distinction that he just made in verse 17 about that it's not really him.

The sin that dwells in him.

"The sin dwells in my flesh."

So, it's not really me, not the new me, not the recreated me, not the divine, incorruptible nature planted in me, not the eternal seed which cannot sin.

It's not that me but it is my flesh.

I don't see any good thing in my unredeemed humanity.

So, he says, "In me," but he particularizes which part, "that is in my flesh."

Sin is seated in the flesh. The flesh is our humanness. It isn't necessarily in and of itself evil, but it's where sin finds its base of operation.

Paul limits the area of corruption in the believer to the flesh, to the unredeemed mortality. That is why when you die and leave this body, no change needs to be made for you to enter eternal glory, because all you need to be fitted for that is not the addition of something but the subtraction.

Paul limits the area of sin to the fallenness of his unredeemed mortality.

Paul is no longer in the flesh.

Unsaved people are only flesh and nothing else.

Proof:

V 18, *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

In other words, there is something in me that wants to do what's right.

What Paul is saying that is I can't do it to the extent that my heart longs to do it.

I can't perform it in the way that I want to perform it.

If you look at your own Christian life and you see the flow of growth.

You are going to have a greater hatred for your sin now than you did long ago. Earlier didn't understand how serious sin was, and the holiness of God, and the infinite purity of His holy Word.

As you grow, the growth escalates your sensitivity to sin. The spiritual growth involves the decreasing frequency of sin and heightened sensitivity. Same is Paul's experience.

The real me down inside wants to do what God wants, but I can't perform the thing the way I want to.

V 19, he says similarly as he said in verse 16.

V 19, *For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*

I want it. I just can't do it.

In the Old Testament and we see David. David is known as a man after God's heart. Sweet singer of the Psalms of Israel, wonderful man of God, exalted. Jesus Christ is glorified in being called "the Son of David"

Yet if we read the Old Testament, we will not find any writer in the Old Testament who is more overawed, who is more contrite, who is more sensitive to his sin than David.

It is David who cries out to God through the Psalms, particularly **Psalm 32 and 51**.

- cries out to God for mercy,
- cries out to God for loving kindness,
- cries out to God for compassion in the midst of his sinfulness?

It was David who was so near to the heart of God that any sin in his life became cause for him to have a broken heart.

So, the struggle here to me is clearly the struggle of the regenerate man. Unsaved people don't even understand this kind of attitude.

Source:

V 20, Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Same thing what Paul said in verse 17.

It's no more I.

No more since when?

Salvation.

Before salvation, unsaved people can't be in this chapter because there's "no more" for them. There's no "no more." There never was a change.

It's always been the same.

But since he is redeemed, there is a “no more.”

Since that redemption, it is no more that recreated I, that real self that is doing these things, but it is sin that dwells there.

So, we fight, and we lose. The losses seem so much more overwhelming because of the perfection of God’s holy law.

Romans 5, 6, and 7, results of justification by faith.

The first one we saw in chapter 5 was eternal security.

The second we saw in chapter 6 was holiness.

In chapter 7 we saw freedom, fruitfulness, and service.

Fourth one in this chapter, sensitivity to sin.

That is a result of justification.

Third Lament:

Condition.

V 21, I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

Paul says “I find a law.”

He means a principle. There’s the law of God. Another principle, another standard that makes demands on me, another inflexible law that drives me to conformity.

It’s battling

- every good thought,

- every good intention,
- every good motive,
- every good word,
- every good deed,
- every good act.

It isn't far off.

It's right at hand.

It isn't the real me but it isn't far away.

Proof.

V 22, *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

How can you prove this again?

I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

That's one side of the conflict. In his inward man he delights in God's law.

Psalm 119 is the best Old Testament parallel to **Romans 7**.

Psalm 119:77, *Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; For Your law is my delight.*

Maybe Paul had in mind that very passage.

Psalm 119:111, *Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, For they are the rejoicing of my heart.*

Psalm 119:20, *My soul breaks with longing For Your judgments at all times.*

What is the mark of the truly spiritual man?

Psalm 1:2, *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

The regenerate man is marked by a love of the Word of God and delighting in that law after the inward man.

“after the inward man.”

“From the bottom of my heart.”

From the deepest part of me.

The deepest part of him is the bottom of his heart, the inward man, the inner man, the real person inside hungers, longs, delights, and loves the law of God. The deepest joy, the truest expression of personhood is to delight in God’s law.

The inward man is that renewed, redeemed nature.

2 Corinthians 4:16, *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*

Ephesians 3:16, *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,*

V 23, *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

What are members?

They are the human factors, the bodily factors, the flesh, humanness, unredeemed mortality.

Paul sees in verse 23 another law, and this law isn't in his real self.

It's in his outer man.

It is warring against the law of my mind.

The law of his mind is the same as that which is the law of God, that which is the inner man. So, the mind is equated with the inner man.

Paul sees the war. Sometimes he confesses the law in my members wins against the law of my mind, and thus "brings me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." He makes a very clear distinction.

Psalm 119:20, *My soul breaks with longing For Your judgments at all times.*

A spiritual person with that kind of heart-breaking longing for the things of God.

Psalm 119:70, *Their heart is as fat as grease, But I delight in Your law.*

Psalm 119:81, *My soul faints for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word. ⁸² My eyes fail from searching Your word, Saying, "When will You comfort me?" ⁸³ For I have become like a wineskin in smoke, Yet I do not forget Your statutes.*

I am drying out. I need Your law so desperately. I feel so cut off from it.

Here is this heart panting after God's law.

Psalm 119:92, *Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction.*

Psalm 119:97, *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

Psalm 119:113, *I hate the double-minded, But I love Your law.*

Psalm 119:131, *I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.*

Psalm 119:143, *Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, Yet Your commandments are my delights.*

Psalm 119:163, *I hate and abhor lying, But I love Your law.*

Psalm 119:165, *Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble.*

Psalm 119:174, *I long for Your salvation, O Lord, And Your law is my delight.*

A profound hunger for the commandment. You have little question about the spirituality of this man.

Psalm 119:176, *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments.*

What are you doing ending a thing like that?

I love Your law. At the very end he says, "But I have gone astray."

He was right where Paul was!

Same conflict.

It's no different.

Source.

V 23, *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

What is the source?

My members.

Why do you sin?

Sin is still there in your humanness.

This must be a believer because unbelievers aren't brought into the captivity of sin.

They are already there.

Your members, your humanness, includes your mind, and your emotion, your feeling, your body, and all those things.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4, *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,*

Though we must walk around in this flesh.

The weapons with which we fight are not fleshly.

They are spiritual.

Three laments, and they emphasize the condition of the believer. It's a condition of conflict.

They emphasize the proof of that, inability to do God's will to the extent we know we ought to.

They emphasize the source of that, indwelling sin.

Godly believer cries out for deliverance from this.

If three laments aren't enough, he lets out a wail.

V 24, *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

Can this be the apostle, Paul?

Can this be a Christian?

He wants to be all that God wants him to be.

The Psalmist cries out in Psalm 6.

Psalms 6:1-6, *O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. ² Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled. ³ My soul also is greatly troubled; But You, O Lord—how long? ⁴ Return, O Lord, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake! ⁵ For in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks? ⁶ I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears.*

What the Psalmist is saying is, “I am so sick and tired of not being everything I ought to be.”

Psalm 38:1-9, *O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure! ²For Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses me down. ³There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin. ⁴For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. ⁵My wounds are foul and festering Because of my foolishness. ⁶I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. ⁷For my loins are full of inflammation, And there is no soundness in my flesh. ⁸I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. ⁹Lord, all my desire is before You;*

If all your desire is before Him, how could you be in that mess?
That is the battle!

David is saying little else than what Paul is saying.

“O wretched man that I am. My heart panted. My strength failed me.”

He wanted to be more than he was, and he found himself debilitated by his humanness.

Psalm 130:1-5, *Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; ²Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of*

my supplications. ³ If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. ⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope.

Here again, crying out of sin by one who is godly. This is the way of the redeemed. "O wretched man that I am."

V 24, *"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

Where is his problem?

It is in his body.

It is a body of death.

The word "deliver" is the word "rescue."

It's used to denote the act of a soldier who runs to his comrade in the midst of a battle, and he rescues him from the enemy.

The body of death is very interesting.

It is the unredeemed mortality.

It is the body, the members, the flesh.

It has been reported that near Tarsus where Saul was born there was a tribe of people who inflicted the terrible penalty upon a murderer. When a person murdered someone, it was their custom to fasten the dead corpse to the murderer face to face, nose to nose, chest to chest, thigh to thigh, foot to foot.

That was the punishment until the decay of the dead body had killed the murderer.

So tight were the bonds that he could not free himself. And a few days is all it took for the corruption of death to pass to the living and take his life.

Paul looks at himself and he sees that in his own case, and senses that he is face to face, chest to chest, thigh to thigh to something that is dead and corrupt and killing, and cries, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?”

Is there any hope?

There is hope.

V 25, I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

That sounds like triumph, but it is an assurance.

How do you get deliverance from the conflict?

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

What would he have in mind?

Paul has Roman’s 8th chapter in his mind.

Romans 8:18, *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Romans 8:23, *Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*

In other words, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have the new creation. We have the eternal seed. We have the divine nature.

We are waiting for the final phase of salvation, for we are saved in hope. We are still hoping for that day when we fully are freed and redeemed in body as well as soul.

Final redemption is going to come when He appears and when we are glorified, or when we enter into His presence and are glorified. That's when the end comes, the end of the battle.

1 Corinthians 15:53-57, *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴*So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"* ⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Almost the same phrase he uses in Romans 7:25.

So, Paul is looking ahead at the time of redemption, and he says, "I see it and it's coming, and I'm living in hope that indeed it will come."

2 Corinthians 5:4, *For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.*

We look for that day. It's the same day he had in mind in writing to the Philippians, when we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body.

That's a triumphant hope!

Meanwhile until then, "with my mind I serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin."

Until that day, the battle goes on, and it goes on as long as we remain in the flesh.

So, the battle isn't going to be over till Jesus gives us immortality and incorruption. Full deliverance awaits glorification.

But that is not to say that we can't experience victory here and now.

But between now and then the Holy Spirit will help you.