



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Romans 69 Sin & Believer Romans 7:14-17

**Romans 7:14-25**, *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup>For 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. <sup>16</sup>If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup>But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>21</sup>I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>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.*

**Does this portion of the scripture describe a Christian or a non-Christian?**

One side says there is too much bondage to sin for a Christian. The other says there is too much desire for good for a non-Christian.

You can't be a Christian and be bound to sin.  
You can't be a non-Christian and desire to keep the law of God.

This is the conflict of interpreting the passage.

**Non-Christian view:**

**V 14**, "I am carnal, sold under sin."

So, they would say that must be an unbeliever.

**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.*

It must be a non-Christian because a person who's a Christian knows how to do what's good.

There is no evidence of the Holy Spirit's power.

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

Paul talks about that we not only have the hope and the joy, but all the benefits in **Romans 5**.

**How can this man be so wretched with so many benefits?**

**How can he be carnal, sold under sin, when Romans 6:14 says “sin shall not have dominion over you”?**

**Romans 6:2**, *Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

**Romans 6:6**, *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

**Romans 6:7**, *For he who has died has been freed from sin.*

**Romans 6:11**, *Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Romans 6:12**, *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*

**Romans 6:17**, *But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*

**Romans 6:18**, And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

**Romans 6:22**, But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

**How can it be said in 7:14, “I am carnal, sold under sin,” is a Christian?**

The emphasis in chapter 6 is on the new creation, the new nature, the new identity, the new person in Christ, the redeemed I.

The emphasis, therefore, is on the holiness of the believer. In his new creation, and in his redeemed self, he has broken sin’s dominion.

The emphasis in chapter 7 need not be the same as in chapter 6.

Every Christian knows that even though he is new in Christ, and sin’s dominion is broken, and sin no longer has mastery over him, sin is still a problem.

So, whether you want to see a Christian in chapter 7, you have still got to see a Christian having conflict with sin even though his new creation, his new self is holy.

It is very important to understand what we taught in chapter 6, the recreated is the new I.

New redeemed self is holy.

But there's still going to be a conflict.

We see that conflict in chapter 7 or not, there is still a conflict even in chapter 6.

**Romans 6:12**, *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*

The body of sin was destroyed, and we would henceforth not serve sin.

**Romans 7:6**, *But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

**Why in verse 12 are you commanding us not to let it reign?**

We have the same problem in chapter 6.

We still must deal with the problem of the believer and sin.

In chapter 6 about our new nature, our new creation, our new essence, Paul never said that from then on, we wouldn't have a battle with sin.

Verse 12 implies that sin could still have a reigning place. It could still be shouting out orders which we are submitting to. We could still be obeying sin.

**Romans 6:13**, *And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

Which is to say you could do that.

That is why you must be commanded not to do that.

So, on the one hand, the problem in chapter 7 is the problem in chapter 6, because you have all those statements about you are dead to sin, sin has no dominion over you, your service to sin is broken, you are now servants of God, and you are free from sin.

At the same time, you have the commands to not let sin reign over you.

So, there are no problems found in the interpretation of chapter 7 that aren't also found in the interpretation of chapter 6.

**Romans 6:19**, *I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.*

When you sin, it isn't the new you, but your flesh, your humanness.

The implication again there is you could yield your members to sin.

### **Christian View:**

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

### **Do the unbeliever delight in the law of God?**

No, we don't find such indication in the Scripture.

**Romans 8:7**, *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

The unregenerate person is not subject to the law of God.

**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.*

Thanking God through Jesus Christ our Lord and serving the law of God with his mind. It's a service of the heart.

**V 15,** *For 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.*

There is a battle here because the deepest truest part of this individual wants to do what is right, but something keeps him from doing it.

**Can that be true of an unsaved person?**

No!

**Jeremiah 17:9,** *"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"*

**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.*

Something deep inside of him wants to do what is right.

**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.*

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

So, the heart, soul, and deep within the individual longs to do what is good.

But there is an evil principle there that causes that to be not so easily accomplished.

**Romans chapter 3**, the evil person has no longing to do the will of God. "There is none good, no not one."

**Romans 3:10-11**, *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup>There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*

Nobody seeks God's purposes, God's holy will, and God's holy moral law.

The conflict here, the tension, the battle between what Paul says, "I delight in, I love, I approve, I want, I long to do," and that that he actually does, can only be true in a redeemed person.

Unregenerate, unredeemed, and unsaved person there is no battle at all.

### **What kind of Christian mentioned here?**

Some say it's a description of a Christian on a low level of spirituality.

A legalistic Christian?

Those kinds usually don't have this kind of perception.

Legalists are under the illusion that they are very spiritual. Never for a minute do they think they are like this.

This must be the most mature spiritual Christian.

Those are the ones who sees so clearly the inability of his flesh as over against the holiness of the divine standard.

The more mature you are the more spiritual you will be and greater will be the sensitivity of their own shortcomings.

Certainly, it is Paul we have here.

The word "I" 32 times

The word 'me' 12 times

The word 'my' 5 times

In Romans 7, totally it appears 49 times.

Some say that this was Paul before he was saved.

This was Paul when he just got saved, and he was infantile, and he was still sort of carnal.

This is Paul at the level of maturity.

What he sees is that he does not live up to the holy law of God, though he desires it with all his heart. He finds himself

incapacitated by that ugly reality that sin in its residual reality is still hanging on. A profoundly sensitive realization.

**1 Corinthians 15:9-10**, *For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

Paul didn't say, "I wasn't fit to be an apostle. He said "I am not fit now to be an apostle. I am the least of all."

**Ephesians 3:8**, *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,*

Paul just used to be the least, now he is less than the least. The more the man perceives himself as over against the holy law of God, though in our judgment relative to other men he is the supreme man, he in his own mind is less than the least of all saints.

**1 Timothy 1:12-15**, *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, <sup>13</sup> although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained*

*mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. <sup>14</sup> And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*

Exactly that is what Apostle Paul is saying in Romans 7.

This is Paul far along in his apostleship, mature in the Lord, walking in the dynamic of spiritual life, having experienced the mighty power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the knowledge of God.

The more he knows, and the more he experiences, the more he hates the sin that he sees hanging on.

Whoever this person is,

**Hates sin.**

**V 15, “I hate it”**

**Loves righteousness.**

**V 19, & V 21, “I would do good.”**

**Delights in the law of God from the bottom of his heart.**

**V 22,**

**Deeply regrets his sins.**

**V 15, 18, & 24.** “O wretched man.”

**Thanks, God, for the deliverance that is his in Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**V 25.**

The Christian, then, lives in two extremes. He holds them in tension.

Temporarily, he lives in this world as a man of flesh and blood subject to the conditions of mortal life. He is a son of Adam. Adam is his fellow, and all other men as well, who inherited the sinful seed.

But spiritually, he has passed from darkness to light, from death to life. He now shares in Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and is now the possessor of an incorruptible eternal seed, the divine nature. He is a new creation.

- He is no longer in Adam.
- He is in Christ.

But sin hangs on in his humanness. So, he is conscious of the presence and power of indwelling sin.

- He despises it,
- He hates it, and
- He loathes it.

Because he has tasted of the incorruptible seed.  
This is the man in Romans 7.

There is a rather dramatic change in the verb tenses in the chapter.

The verbs from 7:7-13 are in the past tense.  
They speak before his conversion.  
The verbs from 7:14-25, they are in the present tense.

The change in the verb tense is a very important.  
It tells us Paul has moved out of the past before he was redeemed, into the present.

There is also a very interesting change in circumstance relative to sin.

From verses 7 to 13, sin kills him.

**V 11**, *For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.*

Sin killed him. It killed all his self-righteousness, all his hopes, all his securities. When he found out he was really a sinner seeing the law of God, it just devastated him. Sin killed him.

V 14, he is fighting sin and he will not let it kill him. He will not give in to it.

I believe this is Paul's own testimony of how it is to live as a Spirit-controlled mature believer who loves with all his heart the precious, beautiful, holy, majestic law of God, and finds himself wrapped in human flesh, and unable to fulfil the law of God the way his heart wants him to.

**When you become a Christian and you read about sin in the Bible, are you less concerned about your sin because you are now a Christian?**

No, you should be more concerned about it.

The law will always reveal sin.

**Psalms 119:11**, *Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*

It isn't just information. We don't go through life just needing information. We need conviction. The law has that power.

So, while telling us that the law cannot save us and the law cannot sanctify, he affirms that it is good, holy, and just because it does convict of sin.

Before you are saved and brings you to Christ.

After you are saved you will understand God's holy standard and long with all your heart to fulfil it.

The problem is not the law. The problem is us.

**Verse 14.** It is a picture of the indwelling sin in the life of a believer.

This is a very heart-breaking passage.

It is a rare passage in the Bible because it does something that rarely happens.

This is a series of laments.

It is a series of mournful cries.

It is a series of desperate, sorrowful laments.

They are repetitious. They basically say the very same thing three times.

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.**

**V14**, *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin*

The word “for” tells us Paul is not introducing a new subject. He is continuing the same subject from the prior passage, that is the goodness of the law.

The problem isn't the law.  
The problem is us.

When Paul preached salvation by grace through faith apart from law, he was accused of are speaking evil of the law.

Paul says not at all.

- The law is good.
- I am sinful.

The law does a good work.

- It doesn't save,
- it doesn't sanctify, but it does convict of sin.

Paul begins with a straightforward affirmation that the law is spiritual.

### **What does it mean law is spiritual?**

- It comes from the Spirit of God.
- It comes from God Himself.
- It reflects the holy divine nature of God.

**V 12**, *Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*

We have here is the testimony of a regenerate man.

Pauls says that he got a barrier to doing this, even though the law is spiritual.

The contrast.

I am carnal, ***sarkinos***.

I am human.

I am earthbound.

I am physical.

He doesn't say "I am in the flesh."

He doesn't say "I am totally controlled by the flesh."

**Romans 7:5**, *For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.*

We were in the flesh.

I am not in the flesh anymore.

**Romans 8:8**, *So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

“In the flesh” is an unregenerate condition.

Paul’s terms are very precise here.

“In the flesh” is an unregenerate, unredeemed position.

He says, “I am not in the flesh.”

But he says, “I am carnal.”

**Can a Christian be that way?**

**1 Corinthians 3:1-3**, *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; <sup>3</sup>for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

We are not in the flesh.

The flesh is still in us.

We are no longer in the flesh in terms of being captive to it.

**Romans 7:18**, *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.*

He says the flesh is still there. I am not in it, but it's still in me.

**V 25**, *with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin*

You are no longer in the flesh.

The flesh is in you.

That is simply a term for our humanness.

**Romans 6:12**, *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*

It doesn't reign in your mind.

It is a renewed mind.

It doesn't reign in your new creation, your new nature.

It reigns in your mortal body.

Sin is in our humanness.

When you die you go immediately to heaven because you have already been fit for heaven, all you must do is get rid of the flesh.

I can say I am carnal. There are things in me that represent that.

- I get angry.
- I get irritated.

- I don't fulfil my duty as I ought to all the time.
- I don't maintain the diligence that I should in the pursuit of God that I desire.
- I see my humanness, my fleshliness getting in the way of the accomplishment of all the things that I ought to do.
- I am insensitive to people when they need my gentleness,
- I am not gentle, when they need my kindness,
- I am not kind, and so forth.
- I see myself as human.
- I see myself as sinful.

We all can say this. It's a general statement.

**V14**, *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin*

**If we got delivered from sin, how could we be sold under sin?**

**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.*

Bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.

**What does he mean?**

In chapter 6 was talking about your new creation.

Paul is saying that I - not my new nature, but I in general - see myself as sold under sin.

In **verses 23 and 25** he calls it the *“law of sin which is in my members.”*

The members have to do with the bodily members, the physical, the fleshly and it even goes beyond the physical to the emotions, the feeling, the mind, the thinking. But it's always the members, the body, the flesh, it's in our humanness.

**Can this lament come from a Christian?**

I am carnal, sold under sin.

**Psalm 51:5**, *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*

Now that sounds like a man whose never been redeemed, but David is simply looking at one reality about himself. It is a perception!

Here is a mature Christian.

The maturity of the apostle Paul, who now understands how spiritual the law is, and he used to think it was something external. He didn't know it was talking about the heart.

That is the reason the law about lusting and coveting in the heart, verse 7, really hit him and killed him.

Now Paul sees that the law is a deep, profound, and spiritual thing, a holy. As he understands the law of God and he looks at himself, he sees that he is carnal.

Not only can a Christian say that he has a bondage to sin, though redeemed, because we do have a bondage to sin.

### **Can you break the bondage to sin that you have?**

Not in this life.

The more spiritual you are, the more mature you are, the more likely you are to say this.

Paul recognizes that there is a bondage there.

Every time you sin, you lost the battle, sin took you captive. Paul puts all our feelings into words by articulating the basis of the conflict inside the believer.

We can all see that there is sin in our lives. It shouldn't be there. It isn't the truest thing about us. It isn't our new self. But it's there. This is just every Christian's conflict. There's a sense in which though free in the new nature. We are still bound by the humanness that we dwell in.

You are not less evil now than you used to be in your unredeemed mortality and humanness. You are evil.

It only takes one sin to be evil. There is in you a new nature that is holy, but that sinful presence of the flesh is still there.

Sin is so sinful, sin is so wretched, it is so vile that even when a person has been redeemed, sin hangs on with its clinging wretchedness. That is his condition, and yours and mine as Christians.

The doctrines of our two births.

- Our first birth was into sin,
- Our second birth into righteousness.
  
- Our first birth was physical,
- Our second birth spiritual.
  
- Our first birth made us sinners until we leave this world,
- Our second birth makes us righteous and fit for the world to come.

We are then the product of these two births. We live two lives melded into one.

**Proof:**

**V 15,** *For 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.*

The self-righteous, moral man may deceive himself, but a true Christian led by the Spirit won't.

He sees the proof in him of indwelling sin.

The word "know" speaks of an intimacy of love. It was said of Joseph that he had not known Mary.

Here as a contrast to the word "hate" gives us the liberty of understanding it that way. What he is saying is that which I do, I do not love. That which I hate, I do. Which is another way of saying the same thing.

Now that is a real psychological personal inner turmoil of conflict of the most profound kind.

He says, "My will is frustrated." It isn't so much that when he wants to do one good thing, he can't do it. It is that when he sees the law of God and he wants to do it all, he can't.

Here I am as a Christian, and I would like to say a nice thing about this, or I would like to do something good, I would like to do something honourable and holy.

What he is saying is there is a whole law of God that I want to obey, and I am utterly frustrated in trying to do it.

His will is frustrated. It isn't that evil wins all the time. It's just that he has such a high standard because the law is so holy, so just, so good, so spiritual, that when he sees the high standard of the law, he wants to win all the time on God's side and any victory for evil looks to him like horrendous defeat.

The road to spirituality is paved with a sense of your own wretchedness, always. Not your own self glory.

Here is a truly spiritual man. This is a broken contrite heart. This is a man crying out, "O God, I can't be all you want me to be. I can't fulfil all Your holy and just and good law."

**Source.**

**V 16,** *If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.*

**What is making me want to do the law?**

That new creation, that divine nature in me, that incorruptible eternal seed in me.

That new part of me, it really longs to do the law, it really wants to do the law, and so I affirm that the law is good because the good part of me wants to do it.

**V 17**, *But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

You will miss the whole thing if you miss this. The Christian has in his heart the sense of the moral excellence of God's law.

The more mature that Christian is, the more profoundly committed to the direction of the Spirit of God in his life. The deeper his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. The deeper his sense of God's holiness and the greater the longing to fulfil the law. Since it is the best part of him that wants to fulfil God's law, then God's will must be the best.

So, it isn't God's law that's a problem. The problem is sin that dwell in me. It's our humanness again.

**V 14** is very important because it says to the Christian that if you sin, who's responsible?

It's you.

He is not two people.

He's speaking in non-technical terms.

So, after salvation, the part of man where sin lies no longer resides in his inmost self. It's no longer there in the very substance of what that man is. That's recreated to be like Christ.

Sin finds its residual dwelling in his flesh, in his humanness.

And he says that in verse 18, "In my flesh dwells no good thing."

### **What is the source of Paul's problem?**

The condition, conflict.

The proof, I don't do what I want to do, I do what I don't want to do.

The source, verse 17 sin that dwells in me.

### **Is there a big difference between surviving sin and reigning sin?**

Sin no longer reigns, but it does survive in us.

We are like an unskilled artist who has a picture to be painted, clear view. He sees the mountains, trees, and rivers. He has got his easel, got all his little paints. Ready to paint this glorious landscape.

The thing is, he is like me, and he can't paint stick figures, let alone landscapes. He has the scene to be painted in all its wondrous majesty. He has the paints to paint it. But he doesn't have the skill.

He has weakened by his physical incapacity. It isn't that he can't perceive it. It's just that his clumsiness is in the way. The fault is not with the scene.

Nothing wrong with the scene. The fault isn't even with the paint. The fault is with the artist's inability. That is really where the Christian finds his frustration.

I believe that's where we come to the point where we ask the master artist to put his hand on our hand, to hold our hand as we hold the brush, and paint the strokes that we independent of him could never paint.

That is why we must realize that the victory we do experience comes only when we yield ourselves to the one who can overcome the flesh.

**Galatians 5:17**, *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

How do you win the battle?

**Galatians 5:16**, *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

Spirit can give us victory. But let me just warn you, the more victory you have, and the more you mature in Christ, and the more you see righteousness winning over sin, the more you will recognize the sinfulness of sin, and the more you will find yourself in Romans 7.

It is a place for totally committed, whole-heartedly abandoned people, whose deepest most profound longing is to fulfil the whole law of God, and they are in great distress because they can't do it.

They cry out, "O wretched man, when do I get out of the body?"  
*"When do I unload this baggage and get to glory, and eternally fulfil the law of God?"*