

# (Romans) Romans 7:1-25

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon on Romans 7 emphasizes the transition from legalistic obedience to a joyful, loving relationship with Christ that empowers believers to live righteously.*

**Duration:** 47:56

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:10, Romans 6:22, Romans 7:1, Romans 7:6, Romans 7:9, Romans 7:14, Romans 7:22

**Topics:** "Spiritual Freedom", "Christian Liberty"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of freedom from a legalistic approach to serving God. He explains that even though believers may understand the truth of being crucified with Christ, they still struggle with how to serve God. The preacher emphasizes that serving God should be done out of love and willingly, not reluctantly or unhappily. He also highlights the importance of being released from the law and serving in the newness of the Spirit rather than in the oldness of the letter. The sermon concludes by discussing how the law, although good, cannot make a person spiritual or meet God's standards.

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## Transcript

Today we come to Romans chapter 7 and verse 1. We've been seeing how in Paul's letter to the Romans, there's a logical step-by-step presentation of the Gospel, till we come to the culmination, towards the closing chapter of the book. And so far we've covered chapters 1 to 6, which deals with man's guilt, how God has made provision for our sin to be forgiven, our guilt to be removed, how we can be declared righteous, and how we can become free from the power of sin in Romans chapter 6. In Romans chapter 7, the subject in the first part of that chapter is being free from the law, from a legalistic approach to the Christian life. And in the second half of that chapter, he's telling us how through personally struggling to keep the law, he could never attain to the standard of the law.

We'll look at that later. But first of all, Romans chapter 7, we look at verse 1. He says, Don't you know, brethren, I'm speaking to those who know the law, that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives. That's the first sentence.

How long can the law apply to a murderer, or a thief, as long as he's alive? What can the law do to that man when he's dead? You can't do anything to that man when he's dead. And so, that's the first point to be established. The law can do nothing to a man once he's dead.

The law has no power over a man once he's dead. You see what he's working up to, that we have died with Christ, and that's how we are delivered, not only from sin, that was our old master, but also the law, because the law has no power over us when we are dead. Then he uses the example of marriage.

A married woman is bound by law to her husband while he's living. But if her husband dies, she's released from the law concerning the husband. Supposing a woman is married to a very wicked man, a cruel, evil man, and she suffers and suffers and suffers and suffers under such a husband, wondering when she'll ever be happy, and one day her husband dies.

She's free. Until that time, she couldn't even think of marrying anybody else. But now that her husband is dead, she's free.

She can marry anybody now, someone with whom she'll be happy. But if while her husband is living, verse 3, she marries another man, then she's to be called an adulteress. A woman cannot marry another man when her husband is alive.

Then she's an adulteress, a woman with two husbands. But if her husband dies, then she's free from the law, Romans 7, 3, so that if she's married to another man, she's not an adulteress. He's establishing these simple points and using that illustration to speak about our relationship to the law or the Old Covenant and our relationship to Christ or our relationship to our attitude, rather, to God's commandments in a legalistic way or in a spiritual way.

You know, you can take even the New Testament commandments and keep them in a legalistic way without obeying the spirit of it. A wife can submit to her husband and say, OK, I'll submit to you just because God's Word says so. I don't feel like it, but I'll do it.

That's not the spirit of the New Testament. But she's keeping the commandments, she submits. A husband can care for his wife in the same way too.

OK, I'm supposed to love you, I'll do what I can for you. But that's not true love. It's just trying to fulfill an obligation.

So, when people obey God with that type of a spirit, they never become spiritual. They're religious. There's a lot of difference between being religious and being spiritual.

And so that's what is the theme of Romans chapter 7. Speaking about a legalistic, religious relationship with God as opposed to a loving, spiritual relationship with God. And that's why he uses the picture of marriage because marriage is, or should be, established on the basis of love. And so he says, my brethren, verse 4, you were made to die to the law through the body of Christ.

So that you might be married to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. While we were in the flesh, verse 5, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. It speaks in verse 5, in the last part, of fruit for death.

And in verse 4, last part, of fruit for God. But now, verse 6, we've been released from the law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that now onwards we serve, like I was just telling you, in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. That means it's not an obligation that I have to obey God, but with joy.

You know, in the Old Testament, they were told to type. Ten percent of your income must be given to God. How many people do you think in the Old Testament did that joyfully? Probably very few or none.

But they all did it. But the Lord never said you've got to do it joyfully. The Lord said you've got to do it.

And even today, people who insist on the type, hardly anybody pays it joyfully. They pay it reluctantly. Most people don't pay it at all.

But there is no requirement to pay the type in the New Covenant. Because now the question is not how much you give to God, but how you give to God. It's not a question of ten percent, but giving with joy.

Because we are in the New Covenant. God's not imposing laws upon us. He wants a heart of love.

And that's the point here. Not the oldness of the letter, but the newness of the spirit. We can picture the Christian life, the spiritual man, as one who's gone through three marriages.

A picture of three marriages. The first is our unconverted life, where we are married to our old man, the one that made us sin all the time, that treated us so badly. It's like being married to a terrible husband, who beats us up and hurts us and harms us.

And asks us to do all types of things that are evil. That is our first marriage, our unconverted life. And then we wonder, when are we ever going to be free from this? It's like a woman struggling, struggling, struggling under a terrible husband.

And seeing another man there, whom she wished she could marry a good man. But she can't marry him, because the law says if she marries another person, she'll be an adulteress. Romans 7, verse 3. But this husband of hers is living.

And then one day God does something. He kills that old man. The old husband is dead.

That's what we read in Romans chapter 6. So when the old husband is dead, then I'm free. Then we are free. Now to be married to another.

Because the old... if her husband dies, Romans 7, verse 3, she can marry another. But now, instead of going and marrying Christ, this person goes and marries the law. That's the second marriage.

What does that mean? The law is a very good person. Never does anything wrong. Never asks you to do anything wrong.

Always asks you to do what is absolutely right. Asks you to... But it's very demanding. The law may say breakfast at 8 o'clock.

It must be ready at 8 o'clock. Not even 1 past 8. And it doesn't help you. It's like a husband who never asks you to do anything wrong, but never helps you either.

The house must be spick and span. But he doesn't help you to keep it spick and span. The clothes must be washed perfectly.

But he never helps you to wash your clothes. A very righteous husband. Very demanding.

Absolutely unhelpful. Never does anything evil. Never asks you to do anything evil.

But never helps you one bit to do what is right. That's the law. And the woman is struggling again now.

Her life is miserable in another way now. The old husband used to torture her and tell her to do a lot of wrong things. This new one makes demands which are righteous, but doesn't help her to keep it.

And this new husband never seems to... doesn't look as if he's ever going to die. The law is perfect. The law is God.

The law is given by God. It will never die. It's perfect.

How can God deliver us? The woman loses all hope. And then God does an amazing thing. The woman dies.

And again the marriage is broken. In the first case, the old man died. In the second marriage, the woman dies.

We die with Christ. And again the marriage is broken. Praise the Lord.

We're freed from the law. Now we can be married to Christ. And what is Christ's standard? Is Christ's standard any less than the law? This husband says breakfast at 8 o'clock.

He also wants the breakfast at 8 o'clock. But there's a difference. This husband is helpful.

Now supposing you're one of those lazy wives who can have breakfast ready only by 2 o'clock in the afternoon because you're lazy. This husband says, never mind. We'll work together.

Make it better. And works with us till one day breakfast comes at 11 o'clock, 9 o'clock, and one day breakfast at 8 o'clock. That's just an example of how Jesus helps us to attain to the standards of the law.

He helps us to keep the house pick and span. He helps us to wash the clothes. He helps us to cook the food.

He's a husband whose standard is just as much as the law, or even more, but one who helps us. This is the marriage into which God wants to bring you. You have died with Christ not only to sin.

You've died with Christ to the law so that you can be united to a loving husband to Jesus Christ. Love Him with all your heart. And He helps you to keep God's standards.

We want to continue our study today in Romans chapter 7. If you remember, in our last study, we were considering how there are 3 marriages spoken of. One is a marriage to the old man, a bad husband who tortures us, and God kills the old man, as we read in Romans 6, and that marriage is broken. And then this person who is released from this believer whose old man is dead, instead of being married to Christ, he marries the law.

In other words, he begins to serve God legalistically. He has a legalistic relationship with God according to the oldness of the letter. And he's now suffering under a husband who is so demanding, but who never helps her.

And now God delivers her, not by killing the husband, because the law of God can never be killed, but by killing the woman. We die with Christ. And again the marriage is broken.

We come to the third marriage, which is where we are married to Christ, whose demands and standards are just as much and more than the law, but who helps us to keep the standards. And so it says here, you know, like when a woman is married to her husband, she produces children. When you were married to the law and to the flesh, your children were fruit unto death, it says in Romans 7.5. But now that you're married to Christ, it can be fruit for God.

Even being married to the law does not produce fruit for God. In other words, there's not much difference between being married to the old man and being married to the law, because when you were married to the old man, you committed a lot of sins. God wasn't happy with that.

You're married to the law, and you do a lot of good things, but you don't do it happily. God's not happy with that either. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9, that God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9.7. Now, God's not happy with a man who obeys Him out of compulsion, reluctantly. He keeps the commandments, but unhappily. So God's not happy with a marriage relationship with the law.

Jesus never obeyed the Father reluctantly or under compulsion. He did it joyfully. And when He gives us His nature, we saw that in Romans 6.23, that eternal life is God's nature.

When we get the nature of Jesus Christ, we don't do things out of compulsion. We do it joyfully. And this is the type of life God calls us to, where we joyfully serve God.

It's not fruit for death. It's fruit for God. Something God can be happy with.

What is God happy with? He's happy with the obedience that comes from your heart, joyfully, without compulsion. Anything else is a dead work. See, in the Old Testament, they didn't have dead works.

They only had evil works and good works. And we know what that means. What's a dead work? In the New Testament, you have evil works, dead works and good works.

Evil works and good works we can understand. What's a dead work? A dead work is a good work done reluctantly or out of compulsion, not joyfully. It's right, but God doesn't value it because it's not done joyfully.

It's not done from the heart. It's done externally. It's like a... It's spoken of here in Romans 7, 6 as the oldness of the letter.

A husband loving his wife because he has to, not because he really loves her. A husband helping his wife, doing a lot of good things for his wife because he has to. A wife submitting to her husband because she has to, not because she is happy to do it.

That's the oldness of the letter. And you can do things for God also. Go to meetings, read the Bible, pray, witness, because you have to, because you're compelled to.

Somebody forces you to do it. That has no value before God. I'm not saying you shouldn't do it.

It's good to be under the law until you come under grace, like we drag our children to the meetings in the church whether they like to or not because they're still under law. So I'm not saying we shouldn't do it. A man must be kept under law, but I'm saying that that is not the ultimate purpose of God.

The law is our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. So that finally, we come to the place where we do the same thing joyfully. That child that was dragged to the meetings in the church today goes on its own.

The one who was forced to read the Bible every morning now reads joyfully on his own without anybody telling him. That's the newness of the Spirit. That's being married to Christ.

And that is being delivered from the law. And then only can you bear fruit unto God. Otherwise, even married to the law, you will only bear fruit unto death.

Even what you do which is right will be a fruit unto death which God cannot accept. So this is the theme of Romans and chapter 7. Being freed from the power of sin in Romans 6 and being freed from this legalistic type of obedience to God that's mentioned here in Romans chapter 7. So, he goes on to say concerning this. So when we talk about being free from the law, what shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not.

The law is not sin. The law is perfect. On the contrary, he says, I would not have known what sin was except through the law.

I would not have known about coveting if the law had not said you shall not covet. See, how many people without the Ten Commandments would know that to desire somebody else's property or wife is a sin? I mean to steal it, to rob him of his wife or his property, that is sin. Everybody knows that.

But to desire it, would that also be sin? In the Ten Commandments, nine of those commandments were relating to our external life. You know that I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but Me.

Don't make any idols. Don't take the name of God irreverently, in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

And honor your father and mother, number five. Don't murder. Don't commit adultery.

Don't steal, six, seven and eight. And don't bear false witness against your neighbor. Nine commandments.

It's all in Exodus chapter 20. And they were all external. You could keep it.

But when it came to the tenth one, the tenth commandment was you should not desire. Desire is inward. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

Now if a man stole, you could see it. If he committed adultery, it's an external thing. He could be caught.

But how can you catch a man who is desiring? The tenth commandment was not something which you could catch anybody in. Covet your neighbor's house. Covet your neighbor's wife.

Covet your neighbor's servants or his animals. So, nobody even thought that was sin. But when the law came, Paul says in Romans 7.7, I would never have known that coveting was a sin until the law came.

So when Jesus spoke about lusting after a woman with your eyes, it was there, hidden in the tenth commandment. You shall not desire something. God is forbidden.

You know the first sin that was committed by man in the Garden of Eden when Eve sinned, it was through desire. She had a desire and yielded to that desire. So, when we yield to a particular desire, even in our thoughts, we sin.

But if the law had not proclaimed that, nobody would have known it. So Paul says, how can we ever say that the law is bad? The law is like a mirror. All of us are very thankful for mirrors.

It shows us the condition of our face, whether there's dirt on it. But we can't use a mirror to clean the dirty face. When you see your face in the mirror, it's dirty.

Do you take your mirror to clean it? No. The mirror can only show you the dirt. You need soap and water to clean the dirt.

In the same way, the law cannot cleanse you. It shows you your sin. You need the blood of Christ to cleanse you.

Or to use a more modern example, an x-ray. An x-ray will show you what's inside your body. But it can't cure you.

A scan, a body scan can show you what's inside your body, but it can't cure you. The cure is to come through surgery or medicine. In the same way, the law, like a scan or an x-ray or a mirror, shows you your true condition.

An x-ray machine or a scanning machine, they're not bad things. They show up a lot of bad things inside our bodies. But they're not bad themselves.

They're excellent things. Very useful. And so he says, the law is not bad.

It's like saying, I would not have known that there was a sickness in my body except for that scanning machine. Paul says, I would not have known that there was sin in my life if it were not for the law. The law picked out that small little thing in my heart called covetousness.

You shall not lust. Covet and lust are the same words. You shall not have evil desires in your heart.

And he says, sin, verse 8, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. Saying that sin used this law to remind me of all these wrong desires and aroused all kinds of forbidden desires within me. Paul is very honest.

Paul doesn't pretend that he didn't have a struggle with sinful thoughts in his heart. He says, I found all types of desires. Externally, Paul says in another place that he kept all the commandments from his childhood.

Even the rich young ruler told Jesus he kept all his commandments from his childhood, all the commandments. But, Paul here is very honest and the tenth commandment was placed by God to find out who is honest. And do you know what God is testing in you, my friend? He is testing to see whether you are honest.

Whether you will admit that there are desires in your heart which are contrary to God's laws. There are things in your life which are wrong. The law, the scanning machine shows you what's wrong.

Acknowledge it. Admit it. Apart from the law, sin is dead.

If the scanning machine was not there, you'd be ignorant of your true condition. If the law was not there, you wouldn't realize what a terrible sinner you are. You'd be glorying in your external righteousness.

But when the scanning machine searches the deep parts of your heart, the law of God goes in, the tenth commandment, you discover you are a sinner. And you acknowledge it. And in that acknowledgement is your salvation.

Acknowledge your sin. It's the first step to being free. We turn today to Romans chapter 7 and verse 9. Romans chapter 7, we saw Paul speaking about deliverance from the law and from a legalistic attitude towards the Christian life described as the oldness of the letter in verse 6. To come to a spiritual way of living the Christian life, described as a newness of the spirit in Romans 7, 6. In Romans 7, 9, Paul says, I was once alive apart from the law.

What does that mean? Was he really alive? What he means is, I was unaware of sin. My life, it's like a man who didn't take a scan of his body and didn't realize that he had a cancer inside him. The cancer was growing but he didn't realize it and so he was very happy.

But when he went under the scanning machine, he discovered the cancer and he suddenly realized he's a dead man. So he says, I was once alive apart from the law in this sense. But when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died.

The scan, the x-ray showed me things in my life which I never knew existed. And I died. I died means I was aware.

I became aware that I was a dead person. You see, the Living Bible paraphrased it like this, I felt fine so long as I didn't understand what the law really demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized that I'd broken the law and I was a sinner doomed to die.

Verse 10 And the commandment which was to result in life proved to result in death for me. So far as I was concerned, the Living Bible says the good law which was supposed to show me the way of life resulted instead in my being given the death penalty. The law was supposed to show me the way of life.

But what did the law produce? It just showed me my sin and showed me that I deserve the death penalty. For sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. The Living Bible paraphrases that as sin fooled me by taking the good laws of God and using them to make me guilty of death.

But still, verse 12, you see, the law itself was wholly right and good. You see, sin, terrible thing, it says here, it took the good laws of God and used them to make me guilty. The law couldn't help me.

The whole point in Romans chapter 7 is you cannot become spiritual by the law. You can keep the commandments in a legalistic way, but it doesn't come up to God's standard. The scan shows things that you never see otherwise.

Verse 13, Therefore, did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be. Did the law, if the law caused my doom, how can we say it's good? No. It's not that.

It was sin. It's not the law that causes me to die. The wages of sin is death.

It's not the wages of the law. It was sin in order that it might be shown to be sin by affecting my death through that which is good. That through the commandments sin might become utterly sinful.

It is sin, this devilish stuff of sin that used what was good to bring about my condemnation. So you can see how cunning and deadly and damnable sin is. Because it uses God's good laws for its own evil purposes.

And so we see sin is such a terrible thing that not only it makes me bad, but it even takes the good laws of God and makes me even more guilty of death than I was before. So the law is good. Verse 14 The trouble is not there.

The trouble is with me. I am sold into slavery with sin as my master. I'm sold into bondage to sin.

Sin rules me. He says, I'm a flesh sold into bondage to sin. The whole subject of Romans chapter 7 is freedom from a legalistic way of serving God.

And he's saying here that even though you may understand the truth of being crucified with Christ in Romans chapter 6, when you present yourself to God, as it says in Romans 6, now I'm a slave of God and I'm going to give myself to God to serve Him. How are you to serve Him? That's the theme of Romans 7. Not according to the oldness of the letter. You know, a servant can serve his master completely and yet reluctantly and unhappily.

Jesus taught us to pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. How do the angels do God's will in heaven? Not reluctantly. Joyfully.

And obedience without joy is not the obedience God wants. And that's the theme of Romans 7. That the law brings about a certain obedience but it's not the way God wants it. You can be free from the old man and say, well, now I give myself to God but your obedience is still not satisfying God.

The law is holy but sin in you makes you reluctant to serve God. You haven't seen the glory of serving God. The law is spiritual but I am a flesh, soul and bondage to sin.

Romans 7.14 Then he says in verse 15, I don't understand what I am doing because I really want to do what's right but I can't. And I do what I don't want to do. I do what I hate.

How true this is of all of us. We do what we hate. If you're born again, you acknowledge that the law is good, you want to do what's right and you end up doing what you don't want to do.

You determine that you're not going to lose your temper anymore and you do lose your temper. We make New Year's resolutions on the first of January and we grit our teeth and with great effort maybe we are able to keep those resolutions till the fifth or sixth of January. Most people break their New Year's resolutions by then.

A few with greater determination may carry on till about the 15th of January. Hardly anybody goes beyond the 31st of January. It's all broken by then.

So the next year we make a new set of resolutions. That doesn't turn out to be any better either. That which I'm doing, I don't understand.

I'm not doing what I want to do. I'm doing the very thing I hate. Is that your experience? Like we read in Romans 7.15, you are not honest about it, Paul is.

Honesty is something God really loves, you know. He really wants us to be absolutely honest. Lord, I really acknowledge your laws are perfect.

I want to keep them but I'm not able to keep them. Is this your condition? This was Paul's condition too and he was delivered from it and you can be also. Listen, that which I'm doing I don't understand.

I'm doing the very thing I hate. Romans 7.16. He says, I know perfectly well that what I'm doing is wrong. My bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws that I'm breaking.

If I do the very thing I don't wish to do, I agree with the law. Confessing is good. My conscience tells me that what I'm doing is wrong.

So what does that prove? That proves that I agree. God's laws are right. But I'm breaking them.

My problem is not agreement with God's laws. My problem is not that I don't want to do God's laws. I agree with God's laws.

I want to do God's laws. My problem is I don't have the ability. I can't keep them.

My strength is not enough. And so if that's the case, he says, what is it? He says, my mind wants to do God's laws. But my body is habituated to evil.

And he says, it's almost against my will that I'm doing certain things. In that case, he says, I can't help myself because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these things.

You know, I want to do good, but there's a tremendous force of sin inside that makes me commit sin. How honest Paul is and how true to life it is. You don't want to lust anymore with your eyes, but all of a sudden in a moment of temptation, this force of sin makes you do what you don't want to do.

And the same way you don't want to lose your temper, but the force of sin inside you makes you lose your temper. Well, this is Paul's experience also and there's great hope for us because he came through to victory. Then he goes on to say in verse 18, I know that in me nothing good dwells.

That's in my flesh. I'm rotten through and through as far as my old sinful nature is concerned. That's my flesh.

The wishing is present to me, the doing of good is not. I've been converted, I have a desire to do good. Now that's better than the unconverted person who has no desire to do God's will.

He says, I'm not like that. I'm a converted person. I desire to do what's good.

Romans 7 is not describing an unconverted person. We're converted. We're born again.

We want to do what's good. We're not like those godless people who don't want to do God's will. But he says our nature, our flesh is so corrupt, I don't know how to be free from it.

I don't know how to do what's good. Verse 19, when I want to do good, I don't do it. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.

I practice the very evil that I don't want to do. Verse 20, he's laboring the point here. Now if I'm doing the very thing I don't wish, I'm no longer the one doing it.

But sin indwells me. He says, I know where the trouble is. Sin inside me just forces its way out when I don't want it.

It's like you want to keep a door shut, but you can't keep it shut. Somebody stronger than you pushes it open. Willingness to overcome sin is there, but not the ability.

So he says, I find the principle then, verse 21, that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. I want to do what's right, but I inevitably do what's wrong. But it doesn't have to be like that.

There is deliverance, as he goes on to say, in the rest of chapter 7 and in chapter 8. There is freedom. The Holy Spirit can come to help you to be free. We'll consider that in our next study.

In our last study, we had stopped at this point where Paul said in Romans 7 that he was doing the very thing he did not want to do, verse 20. I'm doing what I don't want to do. And I've discovered where the trouble is.

It is sin that has got me in its evil grip. Even when I want to please the Lord, I'm not able to please the Lord. I want to do things in a way that glorifies God, but I can't do it.

Something within me forces me to do what I don't want to do. Verse 22, he says, I love to do God's will as far as my new nature is concerned. See, we have a flesh, which is a picture of this old nature of ours that makes us sin.

We carry it with us till our dying day. We also have this new nature planted within us, new life, spark of eternal life, God's nature within us, that joyfully agrees with God's law that says, I delight to do your will, O God. You know, David said in Psalm 40, I delight to do your will, O God.

But he couldn't do it. And temptation came when he saw that pretty woman. He just fell.

Willingness was not there, but not the ability. This was the problem of life under the law. There were so many people in the Old Testament who wanted to do God's will, but they couldn't keep that tenth commandment.

And that's what Paul is saying. In Romans 7.7, that tenth commandment caught him. He couldn't keep it.

He wanted, he wanted to do, he wanted to do it, wanted to do it, but couldn't keep it. He wanted to do God's will joyfully, maybe typing. He wanted to type joyfully.

He typed, but he couldn't do it joyfully. So, we see here that Paul is very, very honest in this chapter about his struggle, and it's so helpful to us, because we go through the same struggle ourselves. And he says in verse 23, even though, verse 22, I agree with God's law, I find another law in the members of my body.

There's something else in my lower nature that's always warring against my mind, and that wins the fight, and makes me a slave to sin that is still within me. In my mind, I want to be God's willing servant, but I find instead, I'm still enslaved to sin. Verse 23.

There's a war going on, and we all understand this war. In my mind, I want to do God's will, but then there's this other law of sin, which is in the members of my body, which is habituated to doing what is selfish, habituated to being proud, and arrogant, and speaking rudely, and lusting with the eyes. And here is this, here is this child of God who wants to do what's right, and ends up doing what's wrong.

Well, Paul says, verse 24, What a wretched man I am. Let me read the New, the Living Bible paraphrase of it. You see how it is.

My new life tells me to do right, but the old nature still inside me loves to sin. So true. What a terrible predicament I'm in.

Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God, it's been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free. Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So he says, on the one hand, my mind serves the law of God, when my flesh serves the law of sin, that pull towards sin will always be there till I die, Paul says. Now that verse teaches very clearly there's no such thing as the eradication of the flesh within us. Which, however you may want to describe the flesh, there is no such thing as that being eradicated.

The lusts in our flesh remain there. They will not be eradicated. But, there is power to be free from them, to overcome them.

God gives us the ability, not only the willingness. That is the new covenant. So, in Romans 7, he's talking about how God has given him a desire to do God's will.

But he doesn't have the ability. He's always falling, always falling, always falling. Now, in the new covenant, we are told in Hebrews, in chapter 8, that God has made a new covenant with us now, which is different from the covenant in the Old Testament.

He says he finds fault with that old covenant law in Hebrews 8, verse 7, and says the days are now coming, Hebrews 8, 8, where I'll make a new covenant. And this will not be like the old covenant, verse 9. And this is the covenant that I'm going to make with the house of Israel, verse 10. I will put my laws into their minds.

I will write them upon their hearts. I'm going to put my law into their minds, and I'm going to write them upon their hearts. What does this mean in practical terms? You see, in the Old Testament, the law was written externally on two tablets of stone.

It was not written internally in people's hearts. The new covenant, God says, what was written externally will now be written internally. Those stones, tablets of stone, submitted to the finger of God coming and writing those Ten Commandments.

Now God uses that picture and says, I'm going to do the same thing inside your heart. And when I do it inside your heart, I put my law into your mind, I write them in the heart, I'll be your God, what's going to happen? In practical terms, God is going to give me a deep desire to do God's will, and also the ability to do it. It solves this problem.

The new covenant solves this problem. The God who gave me the desire to do His will will also give me the ability. That's what we read in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 13.

God is at work in you. And whenever the Bible speaks about God being at work in us, that is through the Holy Spirit. God works in us through the Holy Spirit to make us desire and to do God's will.

To work, to will and to work for His good pleasure. To desire His will and to do His will. That is what God does in our hearts through the new covenant, through the Holy Spirit.

When it says God is at work in you, what's He talking about? He's talking about the Holy Spirit working inside us. And when the Holy Spirit works inside us, He gives us a desire and ability. He works in us to will and to do.

To will and to work His good pleasure. So, that is what the new covenant is all about. So it says in Romans chapter 7 verse 25.

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord that even though my mind continues to serve the law of God and my flesh will always have this tendency towards sin, it's not going to be, it's not that I'm not going to be free from it. There is freedom. Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, even though my flesh has this tendency to sin, I will still be free.

That's the meaning of Romans 7 verse 25. And therefore there is no condemnation. Chapter 8 verse 1. For those who are in Christ Jesus.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This is God's word. I can be free from sins power in my life.

God wants to set me free and I don't have to live in bondage or in condemnation. I don't have to feel condemned and guilty that there is a tendency towards sin in my life. A lot of people feel condemned because they say, well I'm being tempted, I find a tendency towards sin in my life.

That will remain with you forever and you don't have to feel condemned about it. Isn't that the good news? That is the good news. I don't have to feel condemned about this sinful tendency in my flesh.

No, I can be free from it. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. If you are in Christ the flesh still continues to serve the law of sin as we see in Romans 7.25. That means my lower nature is still attracted and pulled towards sin all the time.

But there is no condemnation. And he goes on to say that the law of the Holy Spirit, Romans 8.2 sets me free from the law of sin and death. That's the ultimate.

There is deliverance but it's only through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no other way to be free. What we can be free, what we need to be free from first of all is condemnation.

This is a very important point because a lot of people don't distinguish between temptation and sin. The Bible says that even Jesus was tempted as we are. We know that in Matthew chapter 4 Jesus was tempted.

And you will be tempted till the end of your life you will be tempted. But temptation does not prove that you are evil. Jesus was not evil.

There was not a speck of sin. Not a smell of sin in his life. But he was tempted.

So what? When you put gold into the fire that's temptation. The gold comes out pure. That's victory.

Jesus was put in the fire of temptation and he came out pure. He was pure when he went in. He was pure when he came out.

The fire only tested his purity. Temptation came and he resisted it and overcame it. God gives us the same nature.

The power of the Holy Spirit gives us the same nature of Jesus Christ within us that's able to resist temptation. Otherwise we cannot do it. Otherwise our entire life will be like it's described in Romans chapter 7 up and down and up and down.

But God wants to free us completely and totally by the power of his Holy Spirit. Open your life to the Holy Spirit.

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