Romans 7: A study of the sinful condition of humanity and its remedy.

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The more one reflects on the scriptures, the more illumination becomes present to the inner man. ***“The entrance and unfolding of Your words give light; their unfolding gives understanding (discernment and comprehension) to the simple.”*** *(Amplified Version Classic Edition, Psalms 119:130).* Let us be as David in Psalms 119:18. Let us plead with God through the day and night. ***Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.***

It is imperative that we understand our sinful nature. Not to do so is to remain ignorant of the hold which sin has on us as it leads us farther and farther away from God. We become the enemies of God by not being subject to His laws for sin in us forbids it. Our study through this paper will look at having a willingness of mind to do what is right but lacking the power to accomplish it. This must be understood in the light that in the fleshly man there is nothing good. Put another way, there is opposition to God in us.

The immensely gifted Charles Spurgeon termed Romans 7:13 in the following manner: **“Dragging the monster into the light.”** How very ap propriate! Sin indeed is a monster of the deadliest kind. Like a cobra’s bite, its venom is toxic inducing spiritual paralysis and spiritual death. There is nothing innocent about it. There is nothing about its nature which God approves. The coming of Jesus into the world was caused by its existence. There is nothing about its motives and intents which justify it. Sin perverts and defiles those who are given to it. It is ravenous and oppressive. It is as a tyrant who rules mercilessly over his kingdom who demands constant obedience and offers nothing of value in return. It is deceitful and charming. Sin, like Jezebel painting her face and beautifying her head (2 Kings 9:30), seeks always to appear attractive and alluring but a pig wearing lipstick is still a pig. To be caught in the hold of sin is to be like a man caught in the middle of a briar bush full of long, sharp thorns. The more he struggles to free himself, the deeper the thorns penetrate his flesh. The bloodletting is great! One finds that sin does not easily free its victim. Let us now look at the text and the apostle’s intent. I will include verses surrounding it (verse 5-23), so that we will not only **see the monster but** also **the monster at work in us.**

*When we were living in the flesh (mere physical lives), the sinful passions that were awakened and aroused up by [what] the Law [makes sin] were constantly operating in our natural powers (in our bodily organs, [*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+7&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-28095a)*]in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh), so that we bore fruit for death.*

***6****But now we are discharged from the Law and have terminated all intercourse with it, having died to what once restrained and held us captive. So now we serve not under [obedience to] the old code of written regulations, but [under obedience to the promptings] of the Spirit in newness [of life].*

**7** *What then do we conclude? Is the Law identical with sin? Certainly not! Nevertheless, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have recognized sin or have known its meaning. [For instance] I would not have known about covetousness [would have had no consciousness of sin or sense of guilt] if the Law had not [repeatedly] said, “You shall not covet and have an evil desire [for one thing and another].”*

***8****But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment [to express itself], got a hold on me and aroused and stimulated all kinds of forbidden desires (lust, covetousness). For without the Law sin is dead [the sense of it is inactive and a lifeless thing].*

***9****Once I was alive, but quite apart from and unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came, sin lived again and I died (was sentenced by the Law to death).*

***10****And the very legal ordinance which was designed and intended to bring life actually proved [to mean to me] death.*

***11****For sin, seizing the opportunity and getting a hold on me [by taking its incentive] from the commandment, beguiled and entrapped and cheated me, and using it [as a weapon], killed me.*

***12****The Law therefore is holy, and [each] commandment is holy and just and good.*

***13****Did that which is good then prove fatal [bringing death] to me? Certainly not! It was sin, working death in me by using this good thing [as a weapon], in order that through the commandment sin might be shown up clearly to be sin, that the extreme malignity and immeasurable sinfulness of sin might plainly appear.*

***14****We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am a creature of the flesh [carnal, unspiritual], having been sold into slavery under [the control of] sin.*

***15****For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+7&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-28105b)*]which my moral instinct condemns].*

***16****Now if I do [habitually] what is contrary to my desire, [that means that] I acknowledge and agree that the Law is good (morally excellent) and that I take sides with it.*

***17****However, it is no longer I who do the deed, but the sin [principle] which is at home in me and has possession of me.*

***18****For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. [I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.]*

*For I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am [ever] doing.*

***20****Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it [it is not myself that acts], but the sin [principle] which dwells within me [[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+7&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-28110c)*]fixed and operating in my soul].*

***21****So I find it to be a law (rule of action of my being) that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands.*

***22****For I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [with my new nature].*

***23****But I discern in my bodily members [[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+7&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-28113d)*]in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh] a different law (rule of action) at war against the law of my mind (my reason) and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs [[*[*e*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+7&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-28113e)*]in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh].*

***(Amplified Version Classic Edition, Romans 7:5-23).***

Romans 7:5-23 provide us with a divine look into the interior of the spiritual man. In the other epistles, I have not found as comprehensive a picture of man’s internal battle with sin as I now find in these verses of Romans. One cannot look at this picture, and walk away thinking that sin is “not really that bad.” The fact is that sin of every kind and degree is altogether offensive to God; He hates it all! He, however, loves us! ***But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*** *(Romans 5:8).* The justice of God demanded a price for reconciliation ***He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things.*** (Romans 8:32). If we can number the grains of sand on this earth and the stars in all the heavens, we can arrive at the boundaries of the mercy and compassion of God towards us. In understanding these things, we can better appreciate the importance of the gospel and its power to provide salvation from sin.

Let us look at Paul’s revelation of how sin works in us and how the Spirit of God enables us to counter it. In these verses, we realize something about the law which is discussed in verses 4-14. In short, the law was a divine light exposing sin in man. It was not identical to sin but rather the means by which was made known. T. Chalmers, a commentator for *The Biblical Illustrator*, said in a note on Romans 7:7, “*The light may reveal an impurity which could not be recognized at night; yet who would ever think of ascribing to light (associating that light with) any of that pollution which it reveals”* Sin does not expose itself but rather covers itself. The Word of God exposes sin in its light. In these verses, there is something which must not go unobserved, and that is that sin will use the law’s prohibitions to come alive! *But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment [to express itself], got a hold on me and aroused and stimulated all kinds of forbidden desires (lust, covetousness). (verse 8).* In verse 11, we find more evidence of this being true. *For sin, seizing the opportunity and getting a hold on me [by taking its incentive] from the commandment, beguiled and entrapped and cheated me, and using it [as a weapon], killed me.* Yet, someone will say that sin is not as bad as one would make it. The world will declare that too much is being made of sin. Such are oblivious to the conduct and workings of sin. The world lies in darkness under the enslavement of the god of this world. In the sinful state before coming to Christ, we are natural-minded. *The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. (I Corinthians 2:14).* However, after coming to Christ, we see things differently. We begin to see sin for what it is. Being born again opens the eyes of the new creature in Christ to the evils of sin. The more they adhere to Christ, the more spiritual the Christian becomes. In this growth process, the convert will come to know through experience what we are studying in this chapter.

The 15th verse of Romans 7 says, “*For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+7&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-28105b)*]which my moral instinct condemns].”* But what does this mean?

*“A common experience: — Every Christian can adopt the language of this verse. Pride, coldness, slothfulness, and other feelings which he disapproves and hates, are, day by day, reasserting their power over him. He struggles against their influence, groans beneath their bondage, longs to be filled with meekness, humility, and all other fruits of the love of God, but finds he can neither of himself, nor by the aid of the law, effect his freedom from what he hates, or the full performance of what he desires and approves. Every evening witnesses his penitent confession of his degrading bondage, his sense of utter helplessness, and his longing desire for aid from above. He is a slave looking and longing for liberty.” (C. Hodge, D. D.)*

We come now to our difficulty in Christ. We long to do right, to please God but the presence of sin in us wars against our spiritual desires. We end up doing the very thing we hate.

The way the 16th verse is worded shows difficulty is meaning. T. Chalmers makes a prudent assessment of the meaning. He says, *“God knows how to distinguish the Christian, amid all his imperfections, from another who, not visibly dissimilar, is nevertheless destitute of heartfelt desirousness after the doing of His will.”* He further adds, “*It is not altogether by the sensible motion, or the place of advancement, that the genuineness of the Christian character is to be estimated. Man may not see all the springs and traces of this moral mechanism, but God sees them; and He knows whether all is slack and careless within you, or whether there be the full stretch of a single and honest determination on the side of obedience.”* I would daresay that when you try to do your best and fail, and as a result your conscience condemns you—take heart! Don’t quit. God is greater than your conscience and knows all things.

Romans 7:17-21 portrays a willingness to practice what is right but an inability to fully succeed. There are two principles at work in these verses: right and wrong. Let me try to look at it in the following way: There is the “renewed” you who wishes to serve God fully. There is that carnal essence of the old man still affected by the lusts and desires of the heart. The “renewed” you moves towards the ways of God will great zeal and determination but the “flesh” rises up and demands of you to yield to its longings. Those pleasures and desires that require no resistance at all to yield to if it is those desires you really want. Too often, we find ourselves really wanting them. But God provides keener insight to us that we may fight all the more valiantly—not easily yielding to the temptations that the flesh poses. But sin is intelligent! It finds a way to trip us. Paul said, “I have fought a good fight!” If we lose, did we go down swinging? Did we give it everything we’ve got? When the flesh tempted us to make provisions for it that pleasure could be enjoyed, did we refuse? When temptation had a hold of our cloak, did we run leaving the cloak in temptation’s arms? Did we earnestly try to do what was right? Did we pray hard to overcome? We possess our souls in perseverance. ***By your steadfastness and patient endurance you [***[***d***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+21&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-25844d)***]shall win the [***[***e***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+21&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-25844e)***]true life of your souls. (Luke 21:19).*** It is the fight in us that matters. It is the heart that we bring to the battle that God looks at—a wholeheartedness. It is here when Jesus becomes our supplement! When we fall short, He makes up the difference! Says Paul*,* ***“****O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death? O thank God! [He will!] through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) our Lord! So then indeed I, of myself with the mind and heart, serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Roman 7:24, 25.)* As Paul concludes the seventh chapter, he realizes the wretched condition of one without Christ. He thanks God through Jesus Christ that such a condition does not have to hinder his salvation which is in Christ. With the mind, he serves the Law of God and with the flesh the law of sin. It is his faith in Christ which lifts him above this deplorable state. Romans 7 indeed paints a bleak picture of man and his nature. But we do not live in Romans 7. We live in Romans 8 where there is no condemnation (8:1, 2). I leave you with this brief story.

**Living in the eighth chapter**: — *A minister was once expounding the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans to a class of colored Bible women, deeply experienced as to their hearts, but very ignorant, as he supposed, in their heads. After he had been talking quite eloquently for a little while, an old colored woman interrupted him with: "Why, honey, it like you don't understand them chapters." "Why not, auntie?" he said. "What is the matter with my explanation?" "Why, honey," she said, talk as if we were to live in that seventh chapter and only pay little visits to the blessed eighth." "Well," he answered, "that is just what I think. Don't you?" With a look of intense pity for his ignorance, she exclaimed: “I lives in the eighth."*

S. Martin has this commentary on Romans 8:1, which should be refreshing to all.

*THE ABSENCE OF ALL CONDEMNATION IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THAT WHICH CHRIST IS TO THE SOUL THAT RELIES UPON HIM. Christ Jesus is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and faith in Jesus Christ appropriates the sin offering to the believer, so that all its sufficiency becomes ours when we trust to it. Observe further, that Christ Jesus is the High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us, and faith in Jesus gives us a personal interest in that intercession. Again, Christ Jesus is the second Adam, by whose obedience many are to be made righteous, and faith in Jesus makes that obedience the garment of our salvation. So that if all this be true, you see at once how impossible it is that there should be any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. But a question may arise, “How may I know that I am trusting in God's Christ?” The reality of our reliance in the Christ of God is proved by the character and style of our life — "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Jesus Christ leads all His disciples to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (S. Martin.)*