
a *Grace Notes* course

The Epistle to the ROMANS

an expositional Bible study

by Dr. Daniel Hill, Pastor
Southwood Bible Church
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Lesson 7

Romans 7:1-25

Grace Notes

Web Site: <http://www.gracenotes.info>

E-mail: wdoud@gracenotes.info

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Chapter 7

The struggle we read of in Romans 7 is a necessary link between the position and potentials we have as explained in Romans 6 and the reality of the Christian Life lived depending on the Holy Spirit, as described in Romans Eight.

We should remember as we progress through this chapter that Paul is looking at a progression. He really set us up for this in Romans 5 where he spoke of the much more things that we have. His goal is much more grace, much more liberty, much more security, much more divine power, much more intimacy with God.

In Rom. 7:11-3 Paul begins with an analogy. And interestingly, he pulls the analogy right out of the Old Testament Law.

Paul is not afraid of the Law, in fact he honors the Law and is aware of its divine eternal purpose. He sees its purpose and its fulfillment in Christ. He sees that he can, even now a being free from the Law, go to the Law for guidance. He does this in his epistles several times.

I Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing. God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

While we are not under the demands of the Law we can make application from the law but these are application and not mandates. They guide and direct but they do not force and demand.

Romans 7:1-3

Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?

For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free

from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

Paul makes an analogy, and an analogy must not be taken too far. Analogies, like parables, are designed to get across one point of truth. We really fall into an allegorical interpretation of the Bible when we try to get too much out of an analogy.

In verse 1, Paul establishes that the only thing that can take a person away from the demands of the Law (and he is speaking expressly to the Jews of Rome) is death.

But remember: Back at the beginning of Romans 6 he talked of a death that was positional with and in Christ:

Romans 6:3-4 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Look ahead also to Romans 7:6, **But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.**

Verse 2, the analogy to OT marriage Law: For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

Very simple analogy. Paul is not including divorce, he is not giving a message on the dissolution of a marriage, he is not including separation or annulment. He is making one point - married, both husband and wife alive, bound together by law.

If the husband dies, she is free from that Law.

Verse 3 - describes what happens if there is no death:

So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from

the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

Notice: There is nothing here about divorce, nothing assumes that they have separated. The only options are that the husband is still alive which would mean the wife is an adulteress or that he is dead which would mean she is not an adulteress.

The analogy is applied in verses 4 to 6.

Romans 7:4

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.

We see how Paul applies the analogy and how it is not specific in every detail. Analogies usually are not.

WE AS BELIEVERS = THE WIFE

THE LAW = THE FORMER HUSBAND

THE NEW HUSBAND = JESUS CHRIST

In the application we, the believer (wife), is made to die to the Law through the literal earthly human body of Christ, His work on the Cross.

Paul has not introduced the concept of the church as the body of Christ in this epistle. And does not until Romans chapter 12.

MY BRETHREN: He is speaking to believers, this is not salvation but the living of the Christian Life.

The result of our positional death with Christ is that we can now be joined to Christ who was raised from the dead by the power of the Father.

THAT YOU MIGHT BE JOINED is an infinitive which views this as the result of our death to the Law.

We could not be joined to Christ if the former husband was alive but he, the Law, is not, because we have been made to die to the Law.

If we, having been joined to Christ, go back to the Law, it is like going back to a former husband.

Now what would you think, if you were married to a woman who had a former husband and you came home from work and there they were together in each others arms?

I do not think you would like it and I do not think Christ likes it when we go back to law.

In a further application of the analogy, Paul brings up an additional result...

That we might bear the fruit for God.

This phrase begins with INA, which looks at a result.

The result is that we bear fruit, which is a one word verb in the Greek and is an aorist, act, subjunctive which looks at a future events based upon present conditions.

The FRUIT we are to bear belongs to God, a dative definite article and dative noun.

THIS IS SET IN CONTRAST WITH v 5: The fruit of the Law is death.

Romans 7:5

For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

Now here we have a description. Much has been written and even debated regarding what the former husband in the analogy represents. Here we see that Paul is not specific but rather expansive.

WHILE WE WERE is a verb in the imperfect tense, completed past action.

Hence, when we were unbelievers, not having died to the law, not being joined to Christ.

The Law aroused sinful passions or affections:

PASSION is the word PAQEMA and looks at passive emotional influences that motivate.

These motives operated in us by way of the Sin Nature

In our members...

So the sin operates by way of the presence of the sin nature that is in us, with reference to the unbeliever.

And that brought about death (Spiritual Death of the unbeliever).

SO THEN: What we have died to and what is now dead to us is not just one specific aspect of this process but the whole process that leads us to spiritual death:

LAW Sin Nature SINS DEATH

Paul's emphasis is on the Law because if you take out the first step in the process the process does not continue to the result of death.

Spiritual Death is defined by and demanded by the Law revealed by God so without the first the last does not follow in the logical argument.

THIS RELATES TO WHAT PAUL HAS already said of the LAW:

Romans 3:20 For through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 4:15 For the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

Romans 5:20 And the Law came in that the transgression might increase.

Going back now to verse 4.

We see the new process that we now have in Christ.

Gordon Fee in his monumental work God's Empowering Presence, describes what Paul is doing:

By this language Paul is moving towards that life of the Spirit, who in Galatians 5:22 is responsible for producing such fruit.

In this verse, v 4, Paul then describes what happened at justification and the potential of our sanctification.

Romans 6:22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your (fruit) benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

Hebrews 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

TRAINED BY IT: Passive voice. The subject receives the action of the verb. This is grace. We not only receive the training itself...but the results of the training as well. People! This is grace all the way, GOD DOES IT ALL.

NOTICE the grace in this passage:

1. God designs the race course, the training course in life.

2. God designs the training schedule.

3. God produces the results.

IN VERSE 11, the results of this training is the Peaceful Fruit of Righteousness.

James 3:17-18

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle (considerate), reasonable (submissive), full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering (impartial), without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

NIV states: Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

DESCRIPTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:

Pure: Freedom from defilement or impurities.

Peace loving or Peaceable:

Root: Particularly in a single sense, the opposite of war and dissension.

Metaphorically: Peace of mind, tranquillity, arising from reconciliation with God and a sense of divine favor.

EIREINIKOS: One who is disposed to peace, Peaceable.

Considerate or Gentle:

To yield. Mildness in the sense of not insisting on the letter of the Law in a given case. It came to express moderation of kindness towards others.

Submissive or Reasonable:

Reasonable is to be easy to get along with, easily persuaded when the truth is presented. Not taking a stand when no stand needs to be taken.

This means that a person will seek that which unifies rather than that which divides.

Full of mercy:

Compassion or active pity. It has the sense of goodness, Mercy sees someone's problems then acts in a manner that is not deserved but full of mercy (the holding back of what is deserved) and grace (the extending of what is not deserved).

Impartial:

KRINO: To sift through the facts and then to decide. To judge but to know enough to withhold judgment or opinion until the facts are in. Or to

know enough not to have an opinion in some matters.

DIAKRINO: To judge or make a distinction between two.. by adding the prefix KRINO is made stronger.

But our word is ADIAKRITOS: Used only here in Scripture.

It means without doubts...without division. It expresses the distinctive assurance and resolution of faith...so it means without wavering or unshakable.

Sincere or Without Hypocrisy

Originally it meant inexperienced in the art of acting. In the New Testament it came to mean one without hypocrisy or pretense, genuine, real, true, sincere.

The legalist is the one who pretends to be righteous but is in reality a bad actor full of arrogance, unrighteous.

Romans 7:6

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

The word RELEASED is an aorist tense that looks back to salvation and is the same word used in the analogy of marriage in verse 2...wife is released from the Law concerning her husband.

Paul also used the word in Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;

It means "to make idle, to make of no effect". The Law still exists, the sin nature is still present in us but we have died to them, we are no longer under that bondage unless we chose to be. To go back to the former husband.

But when we do we make something, or someone else idle:

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

The word SEVERED is the same word we have here RELEASED. When we go back to the Law we make Christ of no effect in our lives.

But when we are in fellowship, the Law and the Sin Nature are of no effect in our lives.

BOUND means not only to be possessed but to be suppressed.

As long as you are suppressed by the Law you cannot be free to follow your new husband, the Lord Jesus Christ.

BUT WE ARE NO LONGER BOUND so that:

We serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.

Absence of the definite article before SPIRIT would indicate that Paul referees to the human spirit, that spirit that is created in man at salvation.

This reflects all the way back to Romans 2:29

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit [in spirit], not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

The human spirit is that immaterial part of the believer that is given by God, belongs to God, ministered to by the Holy Spirit, is the place where truth is stored, from which truth influences the soul, and the part of man that serves God.

The human spirit is one third of what you are as a believer. It is one third of the connected whole of the body, the soul, and the human spirit.

AND THAT IS HOW WE ARE TO SERVE GOD, in the newness of the human spirit, not in the oldness of the letter of the Law.

SOME PRINCIPLES:

1. Being made a creature in Christ is not small thing even for God. It took the sending of His Son and the Sacrifice of His Son, and the Resurrection of His Son to accomplish it.
2. We are new creatures because we have something now we did not have before, a human spirit.
3. In the human spirit we can now serve God in that spirit. That service is not from our ability, it is from all that God gives us by way of position and possession and potential.

4. The human spirit and our new creature status came about by grace.
5. When we want to go back to the letter of the Law we forget who we are, what we are, we forget about grace.
6. It is impossible to serve God by the letter of the Law.
7. And that thought begins to set up the conflict of this chapter. You cannot serve God, please God, have the freedom God wants you to have when you are bound by the Law, living in the Sin Nature.

Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

At this point, a new paragraph begins.

In Romans 7:1-6 Paul has shown that we are not under the Law. In Romans 7:7-14 he will show that a believer who chooses to put himself under the Law fails to avail himself to the resources of grace and is living a life of defeat.

Romans 7:7

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, You shall not covet.

If we were bound by the Law, if we have now been released from the Law, should we conclude that the Law was sin?

Paul says, may it never be!

ALLA is the strongest contrast in the Greek

I would not have come to know sin except through law.

Here he removes the definite article so as to broaden out this principle. In the first use of NOMOS and in the last use in this verse he is referring to the OT Law.

But here, with this more general statement he referees to any law.

Romans 4:15, Where there is no law, neither is there violation.

We cannot assume that man automatically realizes that certain thoughts or words or actions are sin. Law indicates to us what is and what is not a violation.

EXAMPLE: Have you ever been driving down the highway and wondered, what is the speed limit? Am I going too fast, too slow? Until you see the speed limit sign, the Law, you do not know.

Paul adds one more point: For I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, You shall not covet.

This phrase begins with TE GAP which translates into for also...

This is an additional thought to the one just stated, not an explanation of what was just stated.

Paul uses COVETING or more accurately LUST.

Here we have EPITHUMIA and later the verb form EPITHUMEW.

This is the Greek word that translates the Hebrew CHA-MAD which is the prohibition of the tenth commandment.

Hebrew did not have a word for LUST, so this word was used; but in the Greek text the full force of this prohibition is made clear in that it is a prohibition against lust.

We have studied what causes DESIRE to become LUST.

Lust is uncontrollable, it desires to dominate or control others, it hurts others, it ignores the provision of God.

Paul states that apart from the OT Law he would not have known that this type of desire was sin.

So Psychologists will tell us that the desire for what one cannot have is the very first craving for wrongdoing in human development. When you say to your child "NO cookies", and they go for the cookie jar anyway, you are seeing that which is as old as the Garden of Eden.

Remember Adam and the woman, only one prohibition, yet they went for it.

Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its

fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

NOW WE KNOW LUST IS SIN...BUT HOW DO WE KNOW? Because of the Law.

Verses 8-11 must be studied as a connected thought. Paul begins with the Law in v 8 and ends up in v 11 death.

Remember the pattern of v 5: LAW --- Sin Nature --- SINS --- DEATH

Romans 7:8

But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

As soon as the law is stated - "Thou shall not covet" [lust], it is human nature to violate that law.

OPPORTUNITY or OCCASION is the word AFORMJ.

Used only by Paul, it means to make a start from a place. Militarily it was a base of operations. Also used for what was used to start a military campaign, the material, not the campaign itself. Used for capital in business but not the business activity itself.

So here the Law is seen as furnishing sin with the material or capital for its assault. The Law served as a starting place.

Kenneth Wuest sees the Law as the fulcrum that was placed under wrongdoing and lifted it to be sin.

The word WROUGHT or PRODUCED is to carry something to an end or to a conclusion.

And the end was a rebellion against the Commandment that resulted in coveting or LUSTING of every kind.

Then the explanatory GAR, the last part of this verse is an explanation:

For you see, without law (anathous, any law) sin is dead.

The singular use of the word SIN would refer to the sin nature and without law the Sin Nature was dead or unknown to Paul.

THE SIN NATURE WAS the cause of spiritual death and it was producing sins, yet Paul did not know of the Sin Nature.

Principles:

1. You cannot solve a problem until you know there is a problem
2. The Sin Nature was dead in the sense of being unknown as a problem
3. The OT Law, specifically the tenth commandment, brought cognizance of the problem.

All the other commandments of the decalogue are prohibitions against things said or things done. But the tenth commandment is a prohibition against an attitude...thou shall not covet.

In the face of that commandment is where Paul learned something.

4. Paul learned from the tenth commandment that spiritual death comes from what is on the inside of man, not the sins the man commits. He recognized at that point that sin was a result of the Sin Nature.
5. The culprit in this case is the Sin Nature, not the OT Law. The Law worked as a fulcrum to lift sins up.

Romans 7:9

And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died;

When the Sin Nature was unknown, Paul says that he was alive, apart from the Law. Uses an imperfect tense, past complete action, he lived in the past and that life stopped in the past.

ONE MORE NOTE: Paul uses EGW, the 1st person singular pronoun, unusual in Greek grammar. This is the largest concentration of this pronoun found in any chapter in the NT. Found 8 times in vv 9-25. Paul is using to emphasize his personal efforts in this matter or struggle.

Paul employs a parallel to human development. He looks back to a time of child-like innocence.

The time of child-like innocence that we all have is innocent not because we are, we do sin, but we are not aware of the sins. Nor are we aware that it

comes from the Sin Nature that is very much apart of us.

"But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

The commandment came, aorist tense, point in time of hearing the commandment.

Sin revived, also aorist tense.

REVIVED is ANA+ZAW; ZAW is LIFE and ANA means to live again.

Sin, the Sin Nature, which was alive at birth resulting in spiritual death, now lives again, perpetuating that spiritual death.

I DIED, ceased to lived as before.

Romans 7:10

And this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;

The command had a view towards life but found that it had a view towards death for him.

WHY? The commandment was given, as were all commandments, to show the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man and how man cannot keep the commandments.

BUT REMEMBER WHO PAUL WAS, a religious leader, a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, a very learned Jew of the highest standing...certainly he could keep the Law couldn't he?

Well, he thought so and as he tried, he saw more and more the result was death for him.

Romans 7:11

For you see sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.

SIN is singular so we are still talking about the Sin Nature.

OPPORTUNITY is the same word we saw in verse 8, the fulcrum that lifts up our rebellious actions and defines them as sins.

Through the command: Thou shall not covet...

Deceived me, and through it [the Law] killed me.

Why was Paul deceived by the sin nature? The commandment clearly indicated that coveting was

sin and Paul could clearly see that the sin of coveting was not external but came from the inside, from the sin nature.

What is the deception? It is the deception that caused Paul to think he could live under the law, fulfill the law, and again experience life unto God through law-obedience.

But he found that all his efforts at law-obedience came up short and resulted in defeat...and this defeat killed him.

THIS IS THE BOTTOM LINE OF PERFORMANCE-BASED CHRISTIANITY, it does not work!

The result is often more guilt, more loss, more sense of defeat, more sense of dread and death.

WHAT A SORRY STATE TO BE in, but Paul is not going to give up. His struggle in 7:14-24 describe how he continued to attempt to regain life, to be alive unto God in the flesh, by his own merits, his own self resolve, his own disciplines, and how it did not work.

Principles:

1. All mankind go through a state of innocents based on ignorance.
2. This gives way to a state of guilt based on cognizance.
3. The Law makes man cognizant of sins and the sin nature
4. Without the 10th commandment it was easy for Paul, a self-righteous Jewish leader, to see sins on the outside.
5. The 10th commandment, however, placed sin on the inside and with that there was awareness of the Sin Nature.
6. Coveting or Lusting is something no one else sees, no one hears it, but it is there, very real, very much sin.
7. That sin was an evidence of the presence of the Sin Nature
8. And that awareness brought about the recognition of spiritual death.

Romans 7:12

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

There are no verbs in this verse making it a very dogmatic statement of truth.

The entire OT Law and the one commandment Paul has mentioned, thou shall not covet, are holy, righteous, and good.

This was true of the Law when it was given to Moses, and it is true of the Law today.

The OT Law continues to reveal the holiness, righteousness, goodness of God and the sinfulness of man.

Romans 7:13

Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

Paul picks up on that last term in the description of the Law, it is good.

GOOD is AGIOS which looks at a good of absolute character and value whereas KALOS looks at a relative good.

The question raised and can that which is good produce death?

THIS IDEA IS REJECTED BY PAUL, May it never be!

In order that the sin nature might become evident in that act of sin (lust), through that which was good, the commandment.

And that combination, the commandment and my sin nature, brought about death, in order that the sin nature may be seen for what it will ever be, sinful.

That last part uses an aorist, middle subjunctive verb which looks to the future.

Principles:

1. The law shows us that sins come from the inside, the sin nature. And that the sin nature will always be sinful.

2. The recognition of the sin nature results in a recognition of spiritual death.

3. So the process again:

LAW ---- Sin Nature ---- SINS ---- DEATH

4. And that process is exactly the route God wants it to take in our lives.
5. It is only when we realize the outcome is death that we will realize we can do nothing about our situation.
6. So the Law was designed to show mankind that it was impossible to be saved, impossible to impress God with keeping the Law because it could not be done.
7. Rather than be a means of salvation it is a means of death.

That is true about any rigid system including the OT Law. Eventually the one who attempts to please God through some rigid system will realize his total inability to please God.

WHY? HOW? Because it doesn't work, that is why. It just does not work. So the person is eventually discouraged, disillusioned, and they drop out.

Romans 7:14

For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

The problem is not the Law, the problem is what is inside Paul and inside you and me, the Sin Nature.

Reflect back to verse 6: We are released, no longer bound.

Yet even as believers we can put ourselves under the bondage of the sin nature.

Now when we think Sin Nature we usually think SINS.

But what follow this statement through to verse 24 is not a struggle of sins but quite the opposite, a struggle to bring one's life into conformity with God through law-obedience...but there is a problem, it does not work.

AND WHY NOT? Verse 14 tells us: the Law may be spiritual but I am of the flesh, under bondage to the Sin Nature.

Introducing Romans 7:15-24

The personal struggle Paul records in verses 15 through 24 is often seen as a struggle between sin and righteousness or a struggle between God's will and self will.

However, it is neither. It is a struggle between that which will not work and that which will work.

Consider the tone of Romans 7:15-24

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I {would} like to {do,} but I am doing the very thing I hate.

But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good.

So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Some Observations:

1. In these verses Paul mentions the law of God but never mentions God himself.
2. In these verses there is no mention of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. In these verses there is no mention of God the Holy Spirit.

4. Instead, we find Paul referring to himself more than thirty-three times.
5. These verses represent the struggle of the believer who has gone back under the bondage of the sin nature.
6. The desire is there to do what God wants but the divine enablement is not there.
7. The conclusion is that in the flesh, we are all wretched men and women, verse 24.

PRINCIPLE: This struggle then is between the desire of the believer and the sin nature of man.

Lewis Sperry Chafer: "Two extended passages bear upon the conflict which continues in every believer between the flesh and the Spirit, and therein is presented the only way of deliverance. In the first of these passages (Rom. 7:15 to 8:4), the Apostle testifies, first, of his own complete failure and, second, of his victory. The failure is complete in spite of the fact that he has made his greatest possible effort to succeed.

"In Romans 7:15-25 the conflict is between the regenerate man (hypothetically contemplated as acting independently, or apart from the indwelling Spirit) and his flesh. It is not between the Holy Spirit and the flesh. Probably there is no more subtle delusion common among believers than the supposition that the saved man, if he tries hard enough, can, on the basis of the fact that he is regenerate, overcome the flesh. The result of this struggle on the part of the Apostle was defeat to the extent that he became a wretched man."

This chapter ends with Paul's recognition of his wretchedness and with what appears to be an ongoing struggle:

Romans 7:25

So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Is that how we are to live? Is that all we have to hope for? A continued struggle between what we know is right and what the Sin Nature persuades us to do?

NO...that is where Romans 7 ends, but where we are to live, to abide, to have our joy and our life is in Romans 8.

THE KEY VERSE: Romans 7:23

but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Verse 23 mentions three laws:

1. A different law in the members of my Body
2. The law of my mind
3. The law of sin which is in my members

But in the conflict Paul has just outlined, his struggle is between just two laws:

7:16, But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good.

The Law of the mind, agreeing, stating God's law is good

7:17, So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

The law of sin which is in my members, the Sin Nature

7:21, I find then the principle (Law) that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

The law in my members, the Sin Nature

7:22, For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

The law of the mind, again, agreeing with the law of God.

But then there is this third LAW that Paul begins to see in verse 23, a different kind of law:

7:23, But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

The word SEE is BLEPW which is a word meaning a single look or glance.

The word DIFFERENT is ETEPOS (heteros), totally different, another of another kind, totally different.

This totally different law that Paul gets a glimpse of at this point does two things:

1. It wars against the Law of the mind:

ANTI-STRA-TEU-OMAI means something a bit more than just to war against. Means to lead a army against. Only found in this passage.

Like a commander leading a whole battalion of troops.

2. Secondly, this different kind of law takes a captive, that captive is Paul and it does so in the midst of the law of sin or the Sin Nature.

Rather than making me a prisoner it should be taking me captive.

So let me expand this verse:

"But I get a glimpse of a completely different kind of law (not like the law of my mind that agrees with God's law nor like the law of the Sin Nature that is in me).

"And this law is in me, not something on the outside.

"And it leads a battalion of troops (God's grace assets) against the law of my intellect.

"And it takes me captive even when I am in the midst of the Law of the Sin Nature."

WHAT IS THIS THIRD LAW?

Look ahead to Romans 8:2, For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Romans 7 ends with defeat in the struggle because the victory in the struggle did not depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Romans 8 begins the victory...

And what a way to begin!

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

NOW WITH THIS IN MIND LET'S GO BACK TO Romans 7:15

Romans 7:15

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

What Paul does he does not understand.

What Paul does is a middle voice verb, hence the idea is that it is for his benefit.

However he does not understand GINWSKW, to understand in this way would mean that he has progressed in this knowledge to the point where he sees the active relationship of his desires or wishes to what is being done, but he does not see this.

What he wants to do he is not practicing.

He wishes, a mental attitude attestation, to do one thing and yet ends up doing something else.

Both WISH and PRACTICE are pres, act, indicatives indicating they are going on at the same time.

There in is the conflict: Between what is wished in the mind and what is done in practice.

He end up doing the very thing he hates (coveting).

Strong contrast ALLA, but what I hate I end up doing.

Again. both present active indicatives.

Romans 7:16

But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, [confessing] that it is good.

The conflict continues.

The IF is a first class conditional, so this is a true statement and it is asked like a rhetorical question:

But what if I do the very thing I do not wish to do?

The conclusion is that if he does not wish to do it he has recognized it as sin and did so by way of the Law so he agrees with the law that it is good.

GOOD here is KALOS a relative good in relationship to what he is doing.

Uses this word to show that even in his mind he can see that what the law says to do, or not do, is better than what he ends up doing.

Paul is not rationalizing what he is doing as being a better idea. While we do that at times that is a conflict of another color.

Here he agrees that the Law is right, thou shall not covet or lust. But while he knows that he ends up not being able to do that.

QUESTION:

Does merely knowing right, having the knowledge of what is right lead to doing right. Does knowledge change behavior...NO.

What Paul has in the midst of this struggle is knowledge.

Furthermore his wish is to do what is right according to the knowledge he has

But the knowledge and the desire he has is not working

Remember the description of the adolescent believer from I John 2:14 I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you...

The young man knows the Word of God and has gained some strength but then attributes the strength to self and falls.

Paul is saying the same thing here as he reflects on his progress in the faith. He knows, he wants, but he does not do.

What is missing is the power of the Holy Spirit and faith, trust, in that power to take the knowledge and the desire and make it a reality in the life of the believer.

Some Verses:

I Corinthians 8:1 We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.

II Timothy 3:5 and 7 There are those who are: holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Romans 7:17

So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

Paul comes to a conclusion regarding what he wants to do and the Sin Nature that is in him.

He is not seeking to rationalize his sin or absolve himself from its responsibility. He is not saying "the devil made me do it."

What he is saying is that there is a conflict between rational thinking and sins. He says in his rational mind "NO", but he ends up in sin anyway.

So here is attesting to the conflict and the power the Sin Nature has in one's life.

Remember, its sovereign power over us was broken at salvation but it remains and we continue to infuse it with power by the choices we make.

Romans 7:18

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

This is recognition of the Sin Nature with all of its weaknesses, strengths, and trends.

From this recognition Paul makes the conclusion of total depravity.

And here he goes back to AGATHOS when he says nothing good dwells in me.

Paul stated in verse 16 that he recognizes the comparative value or goodness of the law in relationship to his actions of sin.

But here he concludes that there is nothing in him that is intrinsically good or good in an absolute or divine sense.

Then he states the wishing, the desire is there but he cannot do the good.

Here he goes back to KALOS again to emphasize the comparative value or that which he wants to do. When he talks of doing the good he uses KALOS but when, as in the next verse he talks of his desire, he uses AGAQOS, the desire to do the good of God.

Romans 7:19

For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

And instead of and set against the AGATHOS, he does evil.

Not even a good that is good in a comparative sense, but the practice of evil which opposes the grace of God.

And he does not want to do evil, he wants to do good but he does not.

Principle: Whenever we get involved with trying to do good out of the energy of our own flesh, this is evil. It is exactly what Satan wants, he wants us to try harder, do better, attempt to bring our desires to reality by our own efforts.

Romans 7:20

But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

And he places the source of this inability at the Sin Nature.

The IF again is a first class condition, IF, and it is true.

Notice the conflict: He wishes in his mind to do one thing and yet he ends up, from the Sin Nature, doing the opposite.

Romans 7:21

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

From this he concludes that there is another law in him.

I FIND is EURSIKW, as in eureka, to have discovered a truth...

The word PRINCIPLE is LAW and so he has discovered through this struggle that a Law of evil is present in him.

True of all believers. The Sin Nature wants us to try to do good apart from God. Even if based upon the Word of God but to take the truth, the Word and try to work it according to the flesh.

The one who wishes to do good. That statement is a diminutive, a line that is to be thrown away because he has shown that all the wishing, all the desire he can muster up does not work.

Romans 7:22

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

This is not a denial of the truth of the Word or the Law of God.

The words JOYFULLY CONCUR is the word DEIGHT. He has a delight with God in the Law, knowing that it is right, but unable to do it.

Psalm 37:3-5 Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.

The issue is never knowledge alone. Attitudes and actions require knowledge if they are to change but that is only part, trust in Him, faith in what God and God alone can do must under grid all knowledge.

Commit to Him, depend upon and trust in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 7:23,24

but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

The word WRETCHED is TALAI PWROS and means to be physically exhausted, totally wasted from extreme effort.

That is what Paul has been through, a lot of self effort.

"Who will set me free from the body of this death?"

This is the first mention of a deliverance that is not in the form of a law, but is, rather, from a person.

WHO?? The Lord Jesus Christ!

Romans 7:25

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

M.R. Vincent says of this last verse: "Paul says that so far as concerns his moral intelligence or reason, he approves and pays homage to God's law; but being in bondage to sin, made of flesh, sold under sin, the flesh carries him its own way and commands his allegiance to the economy of sin. It should be carefully noted that this last summation does not describe Paul after he has found the way of deliverance through Jesus Christ,

but is a recurrence to his discussion of his state before he found victory."

You see, Paul concludes that while with his mind he wants to serve the Law of God, he instead, with his flesh, serves sin.

That is the conflict, you cannot just decide to obey God and have t count for anything in God's plan. You have to have more, you have to depend upon all that God has done for you by way of Grace.