

*The Person of*  
**Romans 7**

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



Introduction  
*Former Captives!*

Rom. 6:14

The human tendency is to try to live the Christian life in the flesh, by works, by our own human effort and striving, by trying and struggling, by making resolutions, by attempting to follow rules and regulations and schedules, and so on. However, the more we try, the more we struggle and fail. We must keep in mind the statement Paul made in Romans 6:14, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” This implies that if we were under law, then sin would have dominion over us.

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**The devil means us no good.**

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God has certain holy and righteous demands that He places upon us. That is law. Now if law means that God requires something of us for their fulfillment, then deliverance from law means that He no longer requires that from us, but He Himself provides it. Law implies that God requires us to do something for Him, while deliverance from law implies that He exempts me from doing it, and that in grace He does it Himself. The trouble in Romans 7 is that in the flesh, we try to do something for God. As soon as we try to please God that way, we place ourselves under law, and the experience described in Romans 7 begins to get personal.

The devil means us no good, and if it were left to him, we would all be living in fear and torment with a dark and gloomy future. The price that was greater than any sacrifice supersedes and nullifies all other sacrifices. Our loving Maker took upon Himself the role of our Redeemer by paying the ultimate price. Therefore, our lives are not our own. Let us thank Him each day and seek His divine grace to live with Him and for Him. Let us always remember where our priorities should lie. Let us always keep in mind the sacrifice He made.

This week’s lesson is concerned with the struggle Paul describes in Romans 7. As you study this conflict, remember that he is writing about “a conflict that is more or less experienced by every soul confronted by and awakened to the spiritual claims of God’s holy law.”\* As you personally face this struggle, remember that Jesus’ righteousness covers us and that in His righteousness we stand perfect before God, who promises to sanctify us, to give us victory over sin, and to conform us to “the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29).

**REACT**

What does *grace* mean and what does *law* mean?

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\* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 553.

Ps. 19:7;  
Jer. 31:33;  
Matt. 7:21–23;  
Rom. 3:20; 7:24, 25

## Evidence “Wretched Man That I Am!”

In cyberspace, there are many videos assaulting peoples’ belief in Christ. Many of these videos are created by skeptics, atheists, and agnostics who believe that a Christian’s conversion is delusional, psychosomatic, or emotional. Generally, these accusations are followed by statements suggesting that most Christians are hypocrites. Therefore, it’s important to ask, “What is the evidence that one is truly converted?” We may claim to be Christians and act as if we are, but even Jesus said in Matthew 7:21–23, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven. . . . I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (NKJV).

### “What is the evidence that one is truly converted?”

Read Psalm 19:7 and Romans 3:20. These verses help us to understand that rather than being the source of sin, the law reveals what is sinful in our lives. The law is a mirror, showing to us all of our soul’s warts and blemishes. Then when we recognize certain of our behaviors and attitudes as sin, we can cry out as Paul did, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7:24, NKJV). (*Wretched* is defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary* as “a deplorable state of distress or misfortune; miserable.”)

Next, Paul asks, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Why does he ask “who” rather than “what” or “how”? He recognizes that he is sinful by nature and therefore has committed acts of sin for which he has earned eternal death. The only way out of his predicament lies totally outside of himself. That answer is Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:25).

Evidence of true conversion consists of at least three factors: (1) We should experience a strong sense of wretchedness after facing ourselves in the mirror of God’s law. (2) Then we must have an aversion to sin in general and to our sins specifically. This aversion calls us to repent, to turn away from sin. (3) Finally, we must trust Jesus to deliver us from sin.

### **REACT**

1. If it’s been awhile since you’ve examined yourself in the mirror of God’s law, take time to do so now. What warts and blemishes do you find? Take whatever time you need to walk through the three factors involved in true conversion.

2. Like Paul, how do you struggle with your wretchedness? Is it ever a good thing to cease this struggle? Why, or why not?

Logos  
*Delivered From Law and  
From Sin*

Romans 7

***The Commonality of Sin and Law (Rom. 7:7)***

In Romans 7:7 Paul asks, “Is the law sin?” He answers emphatically, “Certainly not! On the contrary . . .” (NKJV). Still, we wonder what led him to ask such a question. He knew that his exposition of our relationship to sin in Romans 6 had many similarities to his exposition of our relationship to the law in Romans 7. Thus he was compelled to prevent his readers from adopting a false conclusion based upon faulty reasoning; namely, if we are delivered from sin and from God’s law, then law and sin must be one and the same. Of course, nothing could be farther from the truth, but let’s take a look at how someone might arrive at such a conclusion:

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**The law is like a faithful friend or teacher  
who leads us to Christ.**

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- We have died to sin (Rom. 6:2).
- We have died to the law (Rom. 7:4).
- We are freed from sin (Rom. 6:7).
- We are released from the law (Rom. 7:6).
- Because we have died to sin, we are united with Christ (Rom. 6:5).
- Because we have died to the law, we are joined to Christ (Rom. 7:4).
- Because we have died to sin, we walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4).
- Because we have died to the law, we serve in the newness of the Spirit (Rom. 7:6).
- Because we have died to sin, we have fruit for God (Rom. 6:22).
- Because we have died to the law, we bear fruit for God (Rom. 7:4).

***The Human Solution (Rom. 7:1–3)***

Paul uses God’s law regarding marriage as an illustration of how we try to maneuver out of our proper relationship to God’s law. In this illustration, the husband represents the law of God and the wife represents us. In these verses, Paul’s “major point is that death dissolves legal obligation. Therefore, as death frees the wife from the claims of the marriage law, so that she may properly marry another, so the Christian’s crucifixion with Christ releases him from the dominion of sin and law, so that he may enter into a new spiritual union with risen Saviour.”<sup>21</sup>

***The Divine Solution (Rom. 7:2–6)***

In Romans 7:2–6, Paul reveals that the death of the husband frees his wife

from the law so that she can marry again. Likewise, “it is the death of the old sinful self that releases the believer from the condemnation and dominion of the law and frees him to be joined to Christ.”<sup>2</sup> It is He who has walked in our shoes when He lived on earth. Therefore, He understands our weaknesses. Moreover, He is able to impart to us His strength because He has experienced every type of temptation we experience, but without sinning. He will never leave us or forsake us (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5); because of His love and His death on the cross, He totally and eternally identifies Himself with us.

### **Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due (Rom. 7:7–13)**

Romans 7:7–13 begins “one of the greatest of all passages in the New Testament; and one of the most moving; because here Paul is giving us his own spiritual autobiography and laying bare his very heart and soul.”<sup>3</sup>

Now that Paul has lead us into a proper understanding of our relationship to God’s law, he identifies the real problem—sin in all its ugliness. Sin is an opportunistic deceiver that desires to control us (Gen. 4:7; Rom. 7:11). The law does its job dutifully by pointing out sin to us (Rom. 7:7) and by holding us accountable to God (Rom. 3:19). In fact, the law is like a faithful friend or teacher who leads us to Christ (Gal. 3:24), so that through God’s grace, we can truly defeat sin in our lives (Rom. 6:14–18). In this way only can it be seen that the law truly is “perfect, converting the soul” (Ps. 19:7, NKJV).

### **The Ensuing Struggle (Rom. 7:14–25)**

Paul has identified sin as the source of death and the killer of humankind (Rom. 7:11, 13). Now he exposes the depths of the sin problem. He explains that sin is not just an act, but also a principle that comprises our fallen human nature (Rom. 7:14, 21, 23). The law is also now rightly understood (Rom. 7:12, 14) so that we no longer try to do away with it. Instead, we joyfully accept its elevated ideals and character (Rom. 7:22). We also willingly submit to its authority (Rom. 7:25). However, the conflict Paul depicts in Romans 8:6, 7 becomes a source of daily conflict for the Christian (Rom. 7:15, 16, 18, 21–23) and drives us once again to our only source of hope and victory (Rom. 7:24, 25; 8:1).

### **REACT**

1. How many times are personal pronouns *I* or *me* used in Romans 7: 7–25?
2. How many times is the Holy Spirit mentioned in these same verses?
3. What do these numbers imply about our ability to subdue the flesh in our own strength?
4. Is your spiritual autobiography similar to Paul’s? What would it say about your struggle to be free of sin and your attempts to obey God’s law?

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1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 547.

2. *Ibid.*

3. William Barclay, *The Daily Bible Study Series: The Letter to the Romans*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 94.

Testimony  
*Am I Awake  
Spiritually?*

Isa. 6:5

I was guilty of driving while drunk, crashing my car into a telephone pole, and killing the passenger with me—my brother. I had broken not only civil law but God’s law. Now here I was, face down on a prison cell floor. Crying in a fit of rage, I was demanding that God tell me why He had allowed me to live. This was a question only He could answer. For the first time in my life, I truly saw His holiness; and for the first time in my life, I truly saw my powerlessness. Who was I to demand an explanation from the Almighty? I saw God high and lifted up, and as I lay there trembling, I thanked Him for His grace toward me and for not treating me as I deserved. That day, I rose to my feet and praised Him with all my might, with no fear of the other prisoners who might have been listening.

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**As I lay there trembling, I thanked Him for His grace toward me.**

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You don’t have to go through what I went through to learn about God’s grace, but you also must have a personal spiritual awakening. And like Paul in Romans 7, we must all face the true nature of sin. Ellen White wrote that when Paul “looked into the holy mirror [of the law], he saw himself . . . as God saw him. . . . He did not go away from the mirror and forget what manner of man he was, but he exercised genuine repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He was washed, he was cleansed. . . .

“Sin then appeared in its true hideousness, and his self-esteem was gone. He became humble. He no longer ascribed goodness and merit to himself. He ceased to think more highly of himself than he ought, and he ascribed all the glory to God. He was no longer ambitious for greatness. He ceased to want to avenge himself, and was no longer sensitive to reproach, neglect, or contempt. He no longer sought earthly alliance, station, or honor. He did not pull others down to uplift himself. He became gentle, condescending, meek and lowly of heart, because he had learned his lesson in the school of Christ. He talked of Jesus and His matchless love, and grew more and more into His image.”\*

**REACT**

1. Think about your spiritual awakening. How does it make you feel as you remember the day you came face to face with both your true nature and with Christ?
2. Why do we often question our salvation when we struggle with the flesh?

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\*Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1076.

Ezek. 36:26, 27;  
Eph. 2:8–10;  
Phil. 2:12, 13

## How-to *I Do It—Or Do I?*

From the time we were toddlers, we have said, “I do it.” That attitude resulted in shoes on opposite feet and misaligned buttons on shirts and blouses. As teenagers, we rebelled against our parents and others in authority, which often resulted in consequences hard to bear. As young adults, we often refuse the advice of those with more experience, assuming they don’t understand current trends and practices. Only later do we realize that often they were right.

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### If you can’t save yourself, who can?

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Neither does the “I do it” attitude work well when it comes to our relationship with God. So what is our part in living as victorious Christians?

*See ourselves realistically.* We are all hopelessly lost sinners. Romans 7:18 reminds us that we have nothing good dwelling in us, that even though we desire to do what is right, we fail every time. We are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17).

*Admit our need.* David expressed his need well when he pleaded with God to create in him a clean heart, renew a right spirit within him, and blot out his transgressions. Our transgressions are ever before us. We come from a long line of sinners, hopelessly unable to save ourselves (Ps. 51:1–3, 5, 10).

*Realize who can help.* If you can’t save yourself, who can? Just as one who is drowning must surrender to the lifeguards, so we must by faith surrender our will to God. We have nothing with which to recommend ourselves to God. His salvation is a gift. He loves us, and if we don’t resist, He will draw us to Himself and re-create us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then we can be transformed to exhibit the same qualities Christ has (Gal. 5:22–25).

*Choose to obey and follow Christ.* By practicing the presence of God throughout the day and meditating on the life of Jesus, we will be enabled to follow and obey Him and reflect His image to those around us.

### **REACT**

1. Some people feel they are not good enough to come to Christ. Why is this thinking incorrect? What texts can you use to refute this thinking?
2. How can you spend a part of each day practicing God’s presence and meditating on Jesus?
3. Why is it so difficult to see ourselves realistically when it comes to our sinful nature?

# Opinion

## Redemption Through Christ!

Ps. 1:1, 2; 19:7; 86:5;  
John 1:14–17;  
Rom. 3:24; 7:6–8, 12

I find Paul to be a very different type of an apostle. His conversion to Christianity is an amazing testimony. His experiences in life catch our attention and draw our interest. But the important thing here is what God is trying to tell each one of us through Paul—that God’s love is unconditional. Paul persecuted Christians. But then what does he do? He accepts Jesus as His Savior and dedicates the rest of his life to spreading the gospel. He could not have done that without believing in and claiming for himself the grace of Jesus Christ.

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### Paul persecuted Christians. But then what does he do?

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The book of Romans is a presentation of God’s salvation for Jews and Gentiles. What we learn about in Romans 7 is the extreme unconditional love of Christ and His unceasing efforts to save us all. We learn that we are saved by grace through faith, and that as a result, we are enabled by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to obey. Romans 7 also explains the meaning of the Cross for the believer’s life and shares with us critical aspects of sin and righteousness, faith and works, and justification and election.

When we realize the sins we have committed, it’s sometimes even hard to forgive ourselves. But that’s just what Satan wants us to believe, so we just continue to sin. But in Romans, Paul urges us to confess our sins, to ask forgiveness so that we can receive the gift of grace, to put on the righteousness of Christ, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that God will view us with favor. Paul shows us through his life that we can claim God’s forgiveness through Christ and begin a new life in Him. All we need to do is to walk in His footsteps and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us.

God’s law is good. It points out our sins so we can mend our ways and achieve the gift of eternal life through Christ, who loves us and died for all. If we did not have the law, we would not have known our sins. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross proves God’s love for us—that He wants each and every one of us to be saved. He did not give us His law to condemn us but to condemn sin and to save us. The problem is not with the law but with the flesh, which is sinful in nature.

### REACT

How would you explain the importance of God’s law to a friend who does not believe in Him?

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*Shelly Stephen Naik, Taylor, Michigan, U.S.A.*

Rom. 7:7–8:9

## Exploration

# Two Choices; Two Laws; One Savior

### CONCLUDE

It is human tendency to use our own efforts to follow God's law. However, when we do so, we fail to let God's righteousness work within us. We are falsely led to believe that we are weak Christians, and therefore we must work harder to do good works and make God proud.

Romans 7 teaches us that there are two laws, the law of God and the law of sin. We must choose to follow Jesus Christ and accept the law of God if we are to cut our bonds to the slavery of selfish desires. When we make this choice, we become free to follow God and His laws. Sin is something that is present in our human nature, so that in our own power we cannot escape it. But by the grace of Jesus Christ, by accepting His death on the cross, and by allowing the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts, we will be able to follow the law of God.

### CONSIDER

- Memorizing Romans 8:1–4 and explaining to a friend what it means. By teaching someone else what you have learned, you cement that knowledge into your own understanding.
- Writing a letter to yourself that reminds you what to do when you feel overwhelmed by sin and your sinful nature. Be sure to include a few Bible verses from Romans 7 and 8 in your letter. Keep it in your Bible where you can always find it when you need it.
- Making a list of excuses that people have given about why they aren't good enough to follow Christ. Next to each excuse, write a biblical response from the book of Romans.
- Debating both sides of the argument that we are sinful and must follow our sinful nature.
- Observing several children playing together, noticing how they might give in to their sinful nature. Think of ways you might explain to them how God's righteousness can work in their lives.
- Taking a series of photographs that exemplify Romans 8:6.
- Singing the song "Amazing Grace" and reflecting on God's law, which is written in your heart.

### CONNECT

*Steps to Christ*, pp. 18, 19, 30, 51, 63, 64.

George R. Knight, *Walking With Paul Through the Book of Romans* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2002), pp. 175–199.