

THE UNKNOWN MAN OF ROMANS SEVEN

Part 5 Romans Chapter Seven

Romans 7:14-25 (ANOTHER MAN SPEAKS)

For we know that **the law** is spiritual, but **I am carnal, sold under sin.** ¹⁵ For what I am doing, **I do not understand.** For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but **what I hate, that I do.** ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with **the law** that it is good. ¹⁷ But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) **nothing good dwells**; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but **the evil I will not to do, that I practice.** ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

²¹ I find then a law, that **evil is present with me**, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in **the law of God** according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against **the law of my mind**, and **bringing me into captivity** to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ **O wretched man that I am!** Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!
So then, with the mind I myself serve **the law of God**, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Have you ever read this passage and wondered what on earth Paul is talking about? I must confess, I always found this chapter confusing and especially this last part from verse 14 to verse 25.

These last verses of Romans 7 have divided many Christian commentators.

1. Some say it is Paul the apostle talking about His personal struggle with sin.
2. Some say and teach that this is the normal Christian life.
3. Some say it is an unsaved man trying to earn his own salvation by keeping the law.

BUT I DON'T BELIEVE ANY ONE OF THE ABOVE INTERPRETATIONS IS CORRECT.

We see that this man is certainly concerned with keeping the Law.

The Law is mentioned 5 times.

1. PAUL IS NOT TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF. SLIDE HE IS NOT THE WRETCHED MAN. PAUL IS ACTUALLY TELLING A STORY WITHIN A STORY (A LITERARY DEVICE found in classic novels like Frankenstein ... Wuthering Heights ... The Princess Bride.)

HERE WE FIND PAUL MORPHING INTO ANOTHER MAN TO MAKE A POINT. He becomes a man desperately trying to keep the Law and failing badly at every turn.

Note carefully the change to the present tense.

PREVIOUSLY IN VERSES 7-13, Paul testified of his own experience coming back under Law. *(We mentioned this in our first message on Romans 7.)* THIS IS PAUL TALKING IN THE PAST

TENSE ABOUT HIS PAST STRUGGLE AFTER BEING 'SAVED AND COMING BACK UNDER LAW'.

For example, in verse 9 he says, '*I was alive without the Law once: but when the Law came, sin revived and I died (came into death).*' Note carefully the past tense.

BUT HERE FROM VERSE 14 ON ... He starts to speak in **THE PRESENT TENSE** behaving as ... **A MAN WHO IS STILL UNDER THE LAW AND WHO IS STRUGGLING AND FAILING UNDER LAW.**

SLIDE THIS CANNOT BE PAUL TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF IN HIS PRESENT EXPERIENCE OF GOD SIMPLY BECAUSE PAUL HAS PREVIOUSLY TAUGHT THE OPPOSITE -

- **WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW BUT WE ARE UNDER GRACE.** (Romans 6:14)
- **WE ARE DEAD TO THE LAW AND NOW MARRIED TO CHRIST.** (Romans 7:4) ...
- **THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS HAS MADE ME (ALREADY) FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH.** (Romans 8:2)

If this was Paul speaking about his present Christian experience, he would be denying what he believes and everything he's been teaching and has already testified about himself.

2. **PAUL IS NOT TELLING US THAT THIS IS THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE.** **SLIDE**
It never felt right when Christians quoted these verses as part of their normal Christian life.

PAUL IS ALSO NOT TELLING US THIS MAN IS LIVING THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE ... HE'S TELLING US ABOUT A FICTITIOUS MAN WHO IS **LIVING A DEFEATED CHRISTIAN LIFE UNDER THE LAW.**

We read statements as follows ... **SLIDE**

- I am carnal ... sold under sin (Verse 14)
- I don't know how to do right (Verses 18)
- I keep doing evil (Verses 19)
- Evil is always with me (Verse 21)
- I'm in captivity (Verse 23)
- I am a miserable wretch (Verse 24)

CAN YOU SEE THAT THIS MAN IS IN A DEPLORABLE SITUATION?

Can this be the normal Christian life?

Of course not! This is quite depressing – cutting across everything the Gospel announces about us **NOW IN CHRIST.** We are taught in the New Testament we are a victorious people in Christ.

For example **SLIDE**

- 2 Corinthians 2:14 - God always leads us in His triumph.
- 1 Timothy 6:17 - God richly provides all things for us to enjoy.

- Ephesians 1:3 We are blessed with EVERY spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

TRIUMPH, JOY AND BLESSING ARE OURS, AND AS PREVIOUSLY QUOTED, FREEDOM FROM SIN'S RULE.

Yet Christians have quoted these verses to describe **their own Christian Life** and it has been taught from the pulpit.

- This is as good as it gets.
- This is what you have now come into in your Christianity.
- This is what you should expect.
- **This explains what you're going through.**

NO WONDER SOME CHRISTIANS ARE SO MISERABLE ALL THE TIME.

CHRISTIANS CAN WALLOW IN THEIR FAILURE

Some misguided teachers teaching on this passage, leave people wallowing in melancholy, writhing in confusion and dying in depression. As one teacher teaches:

The second half of Romans 7 describes the conflict of the **two natures** in the child of God: Every Christian falls far, far short of the standard set before him.

We mean that his life is far, far below the level of the life our Saviour lived here on earth.

We mean that there is much of "the flesh" still evident in every Christian – not the least in those who make such loud boastings of their spiritual attainments. We mean that **every Christian has urgent need to daily pray for the forgiveness of his daily sins**

(THIS MAN HAS NO CONCEPT OF TOTAL FORGIVENESS OF ALL OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SINS OR BEING HIDDEN IN CHRIST IN GOD, OR, AS HE WAS, SO ARE WE.)

This moan, "O wretched man that I am," expresses the normal experience of the Christian, and any Christian who does not so moan is in an abnormal and unhealthy state spiritually.

The man who does not utter this cry daily is either so out of communion with Christ, or so ignorant of the teachings of Scripture, or so deceived about his actual **condition**, that he knows not the corruptions of his own heart and the abject failure of his own life.

(THIS MAN HAS NO CONCEPT OF HIS POSITION IN CHRIST OR HIS NEW HEART)

Nor is it only the "back-slidden" Christian, now convicted, who will mourn thus. The one

who is truly in communion with Christ, will also emit this groan, and emit it **daily and hourly**. Yea, the closer he draws to Christ, the more will he discover **the corruptions of his old nature**, and the more earnestly will he long to be delivered from it.

(THIS MAN IS DENYING SCRIPTURE THAT TELLS US OUR 'OLD MAN' WAS CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST [ROMANS 6:6] AND BURIED WITH HIM [ROMANS 6:3-4].)

It is not until the sunlight floods a room that the grime and dust are fully revealed. So it is only as we really come into the presence of Him who is light that we are made aware of the filth and wickedness which indwell us, and which defile every part of our being. - A.W.Pink

NO WONDER SOME CHRISTIANS ARE SO MISERABLE ALL THE TIME.

These people breed a melancholy, self-pitying Christianity ... of defeatist Christians ... who now become dependent upon the church and the pastor.

'But that's OK', says the pastor. 'That's why I'm here as your pastor. I'll weep with you and encourage you that ONE DAY JESUS WILL COME BACK AND RESCUE YOU. There is a

hope!

'It's good you feel bad, because if you felt glad ... you'd surely be sinning.

At least we're not alone in our misery ... we can all empathise and hug one another ...

It's good to know we're all in the same sinking boat ... pulled down by the undertow ...'

PEOPLE GET SICK IN THIS PLACE OF EXTREME STRESS AND BY CARRYING INNER GUILT.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD – THE REVELATION OF THE GOOD NEWS AND GOD'S ACCEPTANCE OF US IN CHRIST ... HIS TOTAL FORGIVENESS, IS THE HEALTHIEST SUPPLIMENT YOU COULD EVER HAVE IN YOUR LIFE. IT RELEASES THE MIND ... IT RESTORES EMOTIONAL BROKENNESS ... IT REJUVINATES THE BODY. THE LIFE OF GOD BEGINS PULSATING THROUGH OUR ENTIRE BEING, INCLUDING OUR FLESH.

NO WONDER PAUL HAS THE OUTBURST OF FRUSTRATION AND FERVOUR IN VERSE 25 Thanks be to God = Thanks = 'Charis' = Grace To God

The Vulgate Latin reads *"THE GRACE OF GOD, through Jesus Christ our Lord"*

THIS IS PAUL BEING HIMSELF AND LEAVING THE NARRATIVE.

3. **SLIDE PAUL IS NOT TELLING US THIS IS AN UNSAVED MAN TRYING TO EARN HIS SALVATION.**

CERTAINLY THAT WOULD EXPLAIN IT. But this cannot be the case. Look at what else this man SAYS about himself.

- **THIS MAN TESTIFIES THAT HE LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

SLIDE Verse 15: ... *For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*

He wants to do right and hates to do wrong. (NLT 'For I want to do what is right')

- **THIS MAN KNEW HE HAD A NEW LIFE WITHIN**

As I walked the 'granddog' yesterday morning ... the Holy Spirit reminded me of something this man had said that meant he really did know his new life in Christ.

Look at what he said ...

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

VERSE 18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells ...*

THIS MAN WAS AWARE OF A NEW NATURE WITHIN HIM THAT WAS SEPARATE FROM 'HIS FLESH'.

- **THIS MAN TESTIFIES THAT HIS INWARD MAN HAS CHANGED**

SLIDE Verse 25: *I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

He has had a change of heart which no one can have except they are born again.

A person cannot come to this conviction without the Holy Spirit or regeneration.

His heart has believed ... This man is NOT unsaved or unregenerate.

SO WHO IS THIS DEFEATED, STRUGGLING CHRISTIAN MAN?

WHAT IS PAUL TEACHING US HERE?

PAUL IS TELLING US ... THIS MAN IS TRYING TO BE SANCTIFIED BY LAW.

HE'S TRYING TO MAKE THE OUTWARD FLESH CONFORM WITH THE LAW IN HIS HEART.
HE'S TRYING TO LIVE A 'RIGHTEOUS' LIFE COMPATABLE WITH HIS INWARD DESIRES ...
BUT HE'S DOING IT ALL BY HIS OWN SELF EFFORT.

SLIDE THIS MAN IS ALSO APPROACHING SANCTIFICATION FROM AN INTELLECTUAL PERSPECTIVE AND NOT FROM THE NEWNESS OF SPIRIT WITHIN HIM. (Romans 7:6)

I always wondered why this man said he served the Law with his mind and not his heart.

Did you ever wonder that?

VERSE 23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind ...*

VERSE 25 *... So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

He's approaching it all wrong ... from an intellectual perspective.

Mind = Noi = Intellect

SERVING WITH THE INTELLECT ALONE WILL ALWAYS BRING YOU BACK UNDER THE LAW.

Look at my paraphrased version of the last word this man says ... his conclusion -

Romans 7:25 **SLIDE**

So then, [if] with the mind I myself serve the law of God, ~~but~~[then] with the flesh [I'll serve] the law of sin. (There is no 'but' in the original)

NB: '*I myself*' - This is not by the Holy Spirit nor is it out of my 'New Human Spirit'.

It's his own 'self-efforts'.

*The trouble in Romans 7 is that man in the flesh **tried to do something for God**. As soon as you try to please God in that way, then **you place yourself under law**, and the experience of Romans 7 begins to be yours. - Watchmen Nee*

It tells us we cannot get the flesh to serve God whilst we are trying to do it by our self-effort under the law; however, we spoke last week about how we can bring our members to serve God in the newness of our human spirit in Christ.

WE SPOKE IN OUR LAST MESSAGE ABOUT HAVING THE DIVINE ABILITY TO BE ABLE TO SERVE IN THE NEWNESS OF OUR SPIRIT AND **NOT FROM AN INTELLECTUAL UNDERTANDING AND DETERMINATION.**

Romans 7:6 **SLIDE**

*But now we have been delivered from **the law**, having died to what we were held [fast] by, so that **we should serve in the newness of ~~the~~ S-spirit** and not in the oldness of **the letter**.*

THIS IS LEARNING HOW TO BEGIN TO WALK AND SERVE IN NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT AND NOT OUT OF INTELLECT AND SHEER WILL IN THE OLDNESS OF LETTER OR WRITTEN LAW.

Hebrews 5:12-13 **SLIDE**

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again **the first principles** of the scriptures of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is **unskilled in the word [message] of righteousness [justification]**, for **he is a babe [simple minded]**.

WHAT DOES UNSKILLED MEAN HERE?

I always used to think that this babe-man was unable to teach or preach the Word of God ... but as I studied this the other day, I realised it meant ... he didn't know how to live the life of justification.

THERE IS A SPIRITUAL SKILL TO BE ABLE TO BEGIN TO WALK OUT OF OUR NEW HUMAN SPIRIT ... IN THE HOLY SPIRIT ... THIS IS MATURITY IN CHRIST.

Like a baby who has all the life within ... but cannot yet walk properly ... or keeps pooing his nappies or diapers.

A CHRISTIAN IS CONSIDERED A BABE WHEN THEY STILL TRY TO LIVE BY THE LAW

CONCLUSION

SO WE SEE THAT THIS MAN HAD A GODLY DESIRE TO SERVE GOD, BUT HE LACKED THE UNDERSTANDING THAT HE NEEDED A GODLY POWER TO BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE THAT GODLY DESIRE.

This is like some rich uncle who says, 'I've paid for you to have a week's holiday in the best 5 star resort on the Sunshine Coast ... Plus you can drive there in my million dollar Rolls Royce.'

So you turn up at his place ... get the directions to the resort and the keys to the car. There it is ... silver and gold but when you get in and try to start it up ... its dead. You go and look at the engine but there is none. He says, 'Oh ... I haven't put the engine in yet.'

There you have it ... **YOU HAVE THE DESIRE ... YOU HAVE THE DIRECTIONS BUT YOU'VE GOT NO POWER.**

GOD DOESN'T DO THAT ... HE GIVES YOU THE DESIRE, THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE POWER.

Philippians 2:13 NLT **SLIDE**

*For God is working in you, giving you **the desire** (- there's his desire) and **the power** to do what pleases him.*

NB: GOD GIVES BOTH THE DESIRE AND THE POWER – DIVINE ABILITY WORKING FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

NOT ONLY TO DESIRE RIGHT BUT TO EMPOWER US TO LIVE IT.

WE NEED BOTH DESIRE AND POWER TO BE ABLE TO LEAD A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE. AND GOD WORKS IN US ... IN OUR NEW SPIRIT AND EMPOWERS US FROM THERE.

USE HIS POWER NOT YOUR INTELLECT AND DETERMINATION.

GRACE DOES FOR US WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO ... WHAT WE COULD NOT DO.

**WHAT DO I DO THEN? STOP LOOKING TO THE LAW ... STOP LOOKING TO YOUR ABILITY ...
GIVE UP ... YIELD YOURSELF TO GOD ... SAY, 'I CAN'T BUT YOU CAN'. AND HE WILL EMPOWER YOU.
Look to Christ within and learn to walk from there. Not with the Mind but as we said last week, in
the newness of spirit.**