



R & R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20

breath-taking grace

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

LESSON 8

Romans 7 is a doozy. Scholars argue about what Paul is saying in some of the verses. He appears to repeat himself again and again, making the same point. You may find yourself wondering, “When do we get to the easier stuff”? But once we weed through the facts and get to the interpretation, it’s pretty darn good. The central theme of chapter 7 is the Law. The word “Law” or “commandment” appears 29 times in 25 verses. Yikes! You’ll notice that the Law is also referred to as “the written code” and the “good thing” or “that which is good.” This chapter is similar to chapter 6, but shifts the focus from the tyranny of sin to the powerlessness of the Law.

We all wish we could be free from sin, don’t we? We get tired of the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. It’s encouraging, though, to see a spirit-filled man like Paul struggle with the same things we do. Christian growth is a struggle, is it not? We wish there was some type of instant spiritual maturity, but sadly, there is not. We have to deal with sin every single day of our lives. We battle our flesh constantly. (Well, at least I do.) Chuck Swindoll titled this chapter “Portrait of a Struggling Christian.” You’ll soon see why.

We are going to attempt to look at the big picture and grasp Paul’s basic intent for the chapter. Let’s glean what we can, asking the Holy Spirit to shed light on this difficult part of Scripture. May He lead us into all truth as we seek His wisdom and understanding.

First Day

1. First read through Romans 7:1-25, then go back and break it down into sections. Read each section and list any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts you see.
 - A. Section 1: Verses 1-6

B. Section 2: Verses 8-25

2. What is the central thought of Section 1?
3. What is the central thought of Section 2?
4. Who is Paul speaking to according to verse 1?
5. How would you explain Paul's main point in this chapter, in your own words?

It's important to remember that at this point in our text, Paul is talking about our sanctification. He's been describing and explaining justification, and now he is talking about how we move forward in our Christian life. Also, remember that in Romans 6, Paul shows us how we are freed from sin. In chapter 7, he continues to show us how we are free from the Law, and then in chapter 8, Paul reminds them they are free to live by the Spirit! Swindoll points out something that helped me understand this chapter. He wrote, "Paul's goal in chapter 7 is to relate the nature of this struggle before revealing the divine Helper that God has provided us in chapter 8."

6. Do you think Paul is trying to teach that the Law is "bad"?

7. Bottom line ... where does the real problem lie?

Let's end here for today. Even though it's hard, you're going to fall in love with this chapter, I just know it. Practice your memory verse and see you tomorrow!

Memory Verse of the Week: "Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God, through Christ Jesus our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Romans 7:24-25

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Romans 7 again, then focus on verses 1-6. (In these verses, Paul presents the believer's freedom from the Law. In verses 7-13, he then defends the goodness of the Law and reminds us of its true purpose; to expose sin. He wraps it up in verses 14-25 by revealing the futility of trying to conquer the flesh through the Law.) In verse 1, Paul is saying that Christians have died not only to sin, but to the Law as well. The Law only binds those who are alive. Death breaks the Law's power. "Death cancels the Law's claim upon that individual." (Shepherd's Notes) **What illustration does Paul use to prove his point? Can you explain what he's trying to say?**
2. Marriage is a binding legal relationship, but only if both are alive. In verses 4-6, Paul now applies that principle to us. Our "death" frees us to remarry another. What "death" is he referring to and whom are we remarrying? (Read Galatians 2:20-21)

"Although death changes our obligations, both in marriage and in our relationship to the Law, it doesn't mean the Law has no value. It does mean, though, that we're free from its condemnation. We're also free from trying to earn God's salvation by keeping the Law. We've

been joined to Another; One who kept the Law perfectly and who graciously gives us His righteousness through faith.” (Swindoll)

3. Contrast the two kinds of fruit mentioned in verses 5 and 6.

The analogy Paul uses isn't perfect, nor is he trying to teach something about marriage. Wiersbe explains it best; “When we were unsaved, we were under the authority of God's Law. We were condemned by that Law. When we trusted Christ and were united to Him, we died to the Law just as we died to the flesh (6:1-10). The Law did not die; we died. But in Paul's illustration from marriage, it was the husband who died and the wife who married again. If you and I are represented by the wife (the bride of Christ), and the Law is represented by the husband, then the application does not follow the illustration. If the wife died in the illustration, the only way she could marry again would be to come back from the dead. But that is exactly what Paul wants to teach! When we trusted Christ, we died to the Law; but in Christ, we arose from the dead and now are 'married' (united) to Christ to live a new kind of life!”

4. Of course, Paul knew his hecklers would have problems! Read verses 7-13. What is the objection Paul anticipates in verse 7?
5. So, is sin bad? What does Paul say about the Law in this section?
6. In verse 7, Paul uses an example to show how the Law defines sin. What is his example?
7. The Law does more than reveal sin. Paul is saying that it actually aggravates or provokes sin in us. What does he mean?

8. How can sin “deceive us and kill us”?

I was curious as to why Paul would choose to use the sin of “covetousness” as an illustration. Timothy Keller had a thought on that. He wrote, “Paul wrote that the commandment that killed him was ‘You shall not covet.’ This is not surprising, because Paul had been a Pharisee, and the Pharisees thought of sin only in terms of external actions. They felt that as long as you didn’t perform an evil act, you were not guilty of sin. This made it easier to think of yourself as an obedient, law-abiding person.”

When you read the Ten Commandments as they are written in Exodus 20:1-17, you can see why they thought of them in external behaviors. (Of course, Jesus showed us that all ten refer not only to behavior, but to inward attitudes and motives in Matthew 5:21-22). But if the Pharisee read the last commandment, they couldn’t reduce that one to the external; not coveting has everything to do with inward attitudes and heart issues. Keller wrote, “To covet is to be discontent with what God has given you. Coveting includes self-pity, envy, grumbling, and murmuring. Coveting is not simply ‘wanting,’ it is an idolatrous longing for more beauty, wealth, approval, and popularity. It is not wrong to want things, but if you are bitter and downcast when you don’t achieve them, it is because your desire for them has become idolatrous coveting.”

Paul had never seen it like that, but had only seen coveting as the breaking or violation of a rule. When he finally understood sin as a matter of inward longings and desires, it seemed to slay him. Coveting was a sin against God, which revealed the sinful nature he possessed!

9. For those of you who are “rule keepers” like me, when you finally understood grace, was there a sin that surprised, convicted, or “slayed” you when you really grasped the meaning?

10. Let’s look at coveting for a minute. Did Keller’s definition of coveting shed any light on it for you? Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart. Is there something you are “coveting”?

11. Last question of the day. (I know it was a hard section, so good for you for hanging in there!) Why is it such a good reminder that the commandments are about internal attitudes before they are about external behavior? Is the Lord showing you anything?

Third Day

Work on your memory verse.

Paul has been clear that the Law is not the problem, our sin is. The Law simply exposes the depth and degree of our sin. So the Law reveals and exposes sin, as well as condemns it. Hopefully, we're understanding his point.

Now Paul is going to get a bit more personal with us, revealing his own struggle between his flesh and spirit. I like when Paul peels back his heart and shows us inside. Makes him more human, I think.

1. Read Romans 7:1-25, then focus on 14-25. How would you explain Paul's struggle in your own words? What's the conflict going on within his heart?
2. What emotion do you sense?
3. Do you experience this same struggle? How often?

I never realized this before, but there is a lot of debate between scholars about what "I" Paul is referring to. Paul the unsaved or Paul the redeemed? Most believe that Paul is sharing the struggle he has with sin as a believer. He seems to be describing the tendencies of his old, sinful nature that he still struggles with, like you and me.

4. As we grow in Christ, it seems like we become more and more aware of our sin. Why do you think that is?

5. What do you think the phrase “sold under sin” or “sold as a slave unto sin” means? (verse 14)
6. Irving Jensen asks this question in his commentary and I wanted to ask you as well. He says, “Observe that the problem stated as ‘how?’ in verse 18, and becomes one stated as a ‘who?’ in verse 24. What is Paul’s answer to the problem?”

Regarding verse 14, Shepherd’s Notes wrote, “‘Sold as a slave’ means that he was bought and delivered to sin, as a slave to a master. A slave cannot act upon his own will. He is bound to obey his master. His noble desires will be overruled and crushed by the one who owns him. Through this analogy of slavery, Paul explained why he was unable to obey the Law. As sin’s slave, bought and paid for, he had to do his master’s bidding. No matter how much he delighted in God’s Law, he was powerless to fulfill it.”

7. How does Galatians 5:16-26 shed light on what Paul is saying?
8. How do you deal with the struggle in your own life?
9. Paul doesn’t end the “struggle” in despair, but in victory. We’ll talk more about that in chapter 8, but he briefly addresses it in verses 24-25. Does your struggle usually end in victory or defeat? What makes the difference?

10. Keller wrote, “This passage also comforts us. It is typical, when we struggle with sin, to think that we are terrible people, or very wicked or immature to have such wrestling. But Romans 7 encourages us that temptation and conflict with sin, even some relapses into sin, are consistent with being a growing Christian.” What are your thoughts on that?

We'll end here for today. A lot of food for thought. I say with Paul, "I thank God, through Christ Jesus our Lord!" Oh, what would we do without Him?

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Romans 7 again. Why is it so important to accept that we are “wretched” like Paul says? What’s the definition of that word?
2. I read that it’s liberating to be able to be honest about our wretchedness. We are also supposed to be certain about our forgiveness. We have to accept both truths. What happens if we forget one or the other?
3. Do you feel like you “naturally” want to sin? For example, when something says “Don’t touch” or “don’t eat,” do you want to “just because”? Do you like to buck authority or beat the system? Why do you think so many of us struggle with that?

Swindoll wrote, "So next time you touch wet paint ... or hate your neighbor ... or doubt God's goodness ... or have impure thoughts ... remember: The Christian life is a battle, but the war is already won. If you have placed your trust in Christ, who never broke one of God's Laws, you're on your way home. The struggle is part of the journey."

4. Referring to the paragraph above, why do you think the “struggle” has to be part of the journey?
5. I read an interesting quote by Chris Ash. He wrote, “There is no nature reserve within the human person (even the converted person) that is untouched by indwelling sin.” What do you think he means?
6. How “should” understanding that each believer has this inner struggle between the spirit and the flesh allow us to show more grace to one another in the church? (Does it?) Are you quicker to give criticism or grace?
7. I once read that sin is like those funny birthday candles that keep coming back once they are blown out. Whenever we think we’re “good” we are soon tempted. What would you say to this? Has your “sin” surprised you lately in some way, or the temptation of it?
8. Have you ever been discouraged by the sin or failure in your life? What’s the proper response to that?
9. Ash wrote, “Have you ever felt that you needed both grace AND a few external rules to help you live the Christian life? How does this chapter help?”

10. What is the difference between the Law and good, solid, faith disciplines? Is having certain disciplines wrong?

Romans 7 doesn't give us the complete picture of the whole enchilada! It really sets us up for the truths and the triumphs found in chapter 8 where we talk about God's Spirit for power! Tomorrow we'll read through it, get it in our heads, and then go into more detail in Lesson 9. See ya tomorrow, friends!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Today let's read Romans 8:1-39. It's a long chapter, but oh so good. Let's break it down into sections as we observe the facts. In each section, list any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts you find. Also write what you think is the main point of that section.

A. Section 1: Verses 1-11

B. Section 2: Verses 12-17

C. Section 3: Verses 18-30

D. Section 4: Verses 31-39

2. After reading it through, what would you say is the point of the whole chapter?

3. What immediate application do you see for yourself?

4. Did you learn anything new about God, or perhaps a review of something you hadn't thought about in awhile?

I can't wait until next week to jump into this chapter. I already know what our memory verse will be ... but I'll keep it a secret! 😊 What would you pick as the memory verse? See you ladies next week. You are all amazing!!