

Dear Friends and Family,

I do not understand what I do.
For what I want to do, I do not do.
But what I hate, I do.

Romans 7:15

The words used here are simple. But the meaning is not. Before I delve into the theology of this passage, let's make it personal. We sin. We all sin. Some of us more obviously than others. Some of us struggle with a specific sin that seems unrelenting, while others are victorious over a specific sin almost instantly.

No better passage could explain the life of a close friend who struggled with addiction. He was tormented daily by what he did not want to do, set directly against how he wanted to live in Christ. It was not a weekly battle, nor a daily battle. It was a minute by minute struggle. He hated his addiction. He knew it would destroy him. Yet, what he hated, he did. And what he wanted, was in constant battle against what he didn't want. How does this battle end? Who wins?

This week, each day of study highlights a battle. I challenge you to make Scripture personal. How have these battles been fought in your own life? Are you still fighting? Where have you seen victory? Where have you seen defeat? How does this shape your future and the choices you make moving forward?

Day 1 - Law vs. Sin

Romans 7:1-13

1. Read Romans 7:1-3. Paul uses marriage as an example in two ways.
2. Paul uses marriage to illustrate why the law exists. The law brings order and points toward morality and God's own holiness. Reflect on 1 Peter 1:14-16.
3. In Romans 7: 4-6, Paul compares the marriage relationship to what?
 - a. What parallels are there between marriage and our relationship with Christ?
 - b. Read Ephesians 5:25-27. How is this scripture relevant to this passage in Romans?
4. According to Romans 7:7, how do we know what sin is?
5. Knowing this, why does the law exist?
6. What specific commandment is referenced in this passage?

Katie likes to bake chocolate chip cookies. They are almost irresistible as they come out of the oven, hot and fresh with the chocolate still gooey. Do you know what makes them even more irresistible? When she says, “You can’t have any!” This is the idea Paul is presenting in Romans 7:7-13. Katie making cookies isn’t sinful, just as the law is not sinful. Instead, it is our desire for sin, when we are told *we should not*, which the Law highlights.

*Last week, I asked the following question: “Is it possible to struggle against sin and still be a believer?” How does Paul answer this question in Romans 7:7-13?

Day 2 - Spirit vs. Flesh

Romans 7:14-15

1. Last week we studied what it means to “Live to God.” It seems like the passages we are studying today in Romans 7:14-15 are anything but that. Then why is Paul writing this?
2. Romans 6:11 tells us to count ourselves dead to sin. But Romans 7:14 says we are sold into bondage to sin. How is this possible? How can we be dead to something and also in bondage to it? What does this reveal about sin?
3. Compare Romans 7:14 with Matthew 26:14. What is our weakness?
4. How is it possible to do what we hate and not do what we love? Why does this happen?

In Romans 6 last week, we examined how to live. Paul’s theme centered on the choice between slaves to sin vs slaves to Christ. What differences are there between these two lives? Is it possible to oscillate between the two? Are there areas of your life in which you are still a slave to sin?

Day 3 - Willing vs. Doing

Romans 7:16-20

Just reading these verses is like watching a battle play out on the pages of Scripture. He knows what he ought to do. He knows what he wants to do. Yet he doesn’t do it. Why?

I have this conversation with my kids on a daily basis. My son *knows* the right choice. He *knows* what will keep him out of trouble. But for some reason, he just can’t help himself. He knows the consequences but does it anyway. Why?

As we studied Romans 6 last week, Paul highlighted the benefits of living in Christ vs. living in sin. He logically presented a compelling argument for refusing sin and embracing a life with Christ. He presented a theological and rational case for righteous living.

Now, this week, in Romans 7, it becomes personal. Paul doesn’t share a specific sin. But the struggle is real. Battles are written throughout all of these verses. Knowing but not doing. Willing yet not doing. Paul, graciously outlines struggles with sin. For the grace of every believer, recorded in the pages of scripture, Paul delves into battle with sin.

Consider this verse specifically: “*So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*” Romans 7:17.

What is the definition of *dwells*?

The Greek explains that it implies: *to cohabit*. So sin “cohabitates” within us.

Have you ever considered this dilemma? This constant battle between flesh and spirit? Can sin really cohabit with a believer long term? What is the eventual outcome of any war?

My brother in Christ faced this dilemma. Sin, when given its foothold, begins to dwell. It cohabitates. It becomes the one doing. Where the spirit was willing, the flesh is now doing.

Where are you in this battle? Where is the *willing* present but the *doing* of good not?

Day 4 - Good vs. Evil

Romans 7:21-25

In Romans 7:21 what does Paul say?

He longs to do good, but what is always at hand or nearby?

What is Paul’s conclusion to this struggle between good and evil?

Paul calls himself a prisoner to what? (Romans 7:23) How is this different than a slave? Is one voluntary?

Consider the weight of Romans 7:24. Paul comes to a conclusion about himself and poses a question:

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

- Consider that **wretched** in Greek means: *miserable, afflicted and enduring trial*.
- What insight does this definition give you when considering one who is battling sin as outlined in Romans 7?
- Do remember that Romans 7 follows Romans 6. Paul thoroughly warned against sinning to test God’s grace in Romans 6. How is sin presented differently here in Romans 7?
- What is the answer to this question? Who will set him free from his body of death?

How does Paul end Romans 7? Is there a stated victor? Who wins against sin?

“*I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” is the answer to the question Paul poses in Romans 7:24.

Christ is the answer. The only one who can deliver from sin.

Struggles may be huge, battles may be overwhelming. *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

The flesh will disappoint. Victory might seem lost. *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Battles rage on. Sin seems to win. *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Addiction tormented my brother in Christ. His confession is parallel to the battle recorded on these pages of scripture. The question *“Who will set me free from the body of this death?”* could not be more relevant. This question was answered for him when he met Jesus face to face. Yet it was not defeat. His victory over sin is final. The battle is won. *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Through Christ,
Pastor Matt

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Dr. Matthew Long

Senior Pastor

[FBC of Havelock](#)

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*