

## **Romans 7:1-25 “No Strength In Ourselves”**

So today we are going to continue our study through the book of Romans and if you remember I have mentioned the last few weeks that the truths that we find beginning in Romans 5 and going through Romans 8 are transformational if you can grab hold of them.

I want to point out to you that when we come to Jesus the reality is that we have a new identity...and that means the old identity which we might refer to as the old man dies...and we become new in Jesus Christ.

So before Christ we were dominated by our sinful passions, they really held us captive and we were slaves to the desires of the flesh...But when Christ came into our lives we quickly began to realize that we are no longer slaves to sin but instead there is a new sheriff in town and His name is Jesus and we are now slaves to righteousness.

As we come to Christ a battle begins between the flesh and the Spirit and the reality is that you will either serve one or the other. In Christ you now have freedom to serve Jesus instead of yourself and if you remember last week we said that we now have the choice to either present ourselves unto God in righteousness or we can present ourselves to sin...In Christ we now have a choice.

Now because we have a new identity in Jesus one of the biggest lessons we have to learn to walk in is that we no longer identify with the old life. My identity is now in Jesus and that means I am going to begin to think like Jesus, talk like Jesus and live like Jesus...and as we desire to do this we are going to learn really quickly that the old nature

is still lurking in the background...sadly we often get out our shovels and go and dig up the old man and start feeding him once again.

Paul if you remember last week said we are to reckon the old man dead and that means we need to regularly consider the old man to be gone...we may need to remind ourselves of this truth on a repeated basis...The old man is gone...I am a new man in Christ.

Now that we are in Christ all of us look to serve Jesus because Jesus has ransomed us and set us free by His death on the cross and sadly we are going to discover that we still fail as we go through life...Some of us may have some deeply rooted sins in our life that need to be chopped out by the Holy Spirit...and as God brings us through this process of making us more like Him and removing the sinful tendencies from us we all go through something that is called sanctification.

How many of you are familiar with that term? Sanctification means that we are step by step being transformed in our lives to be more like Jesus...And this process of sanctification is what we have here before us in Romans 7 especially in the second half. As we become more like Jesus we are going to find that we fail and we stumble and yet the Lord is good and gracious to forgive us and to constantly make us more like Him.

**One commentator stated that as we look to serve Jesus we** are not who we were, we are not who we should be, and we are not who we are going to be. **I think that about sums up this process we go through in life.**

While we are going through the process of sanctification it can be frustrating at times...We know what we are supposed to do and yet we find ourselves not doing it...and Paul is going to address that this week and he is also going to give us the key to overcoming our flesh and walking in victory.

So let's begin here if you look with me at Romans 7 verse 1 and we are going to see Paul kind of wrap up what he began to say in Romans 5 as he was talking about how the old nature of Adam is dead and we have a new nature in Christ...Verse 1 says the following **Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?**

We might deduce here that this first verse is written to the Jewish people as Paul speaks to his brethren and mentions that they know the law...I do think though that this applies to all believers.

I don't think we should have the mindset that the law of God which is referring to the first 5 books of the Bible is only for the Jews...I think it is clear that the entirety of the scriptures are for all who believe...so while Paul may be addressing initially here the Jewish believers those who were Gentiles also know about the law.

Now the law of God is a powerful truth indeed for in it you and I become aware of our need for a Savior and we become aware of the simple fact that we fall short of the standards of God...but the amazing thing about the law is that it only has dominion over a person as long as they are alive.

You might think of any law that any country has made and apply it to this...Let's take the speed limit for example. Now the speed limit only

has jurisdiction over a person as long as they are in this world...Once a person moves on to eternity the laws of this world no longer apply. When I go to the grave none of the laws of this land apply any longer...and it's the same when it comes to the law of God...death brings about a completion of its hold over an individual.

In verses 2 and 3 Paul will use an everyday example to prove the point if you look at that it says <sup>2</sup> **For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband.** <sup>3</sup> **So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.**

So the example Paul uses that everyone would be familiar with in his day is the example of marriage...and he speaks from the perspective of a woman and when she is married she is making a lifelong commitment to her husband and she is bound to that marriage as long as he lives.

Now this isn't a lesson on marriage but I will say that God's design for marriage is that it certainly should last for life...Too often today excuses are made to divorce and I don't want to get in the weeds here but divorce should not be an option except in two cases...First if adultery is committed and second if an unbeliever abandons his wife and actually if you want to learn more about marriage just this past Thursday we talked quite a bit about it in our study in the Gospel of Mark.

Back to the point here that Paul is making...When a husband dies a woman is then released from that commitment that was made to her husband...Death brings about a freedom from the previous commitment she had entered into.

If the woman were to leave her husband while she was alive it would be considered adultery, but if the husband dies she is free from that law and not considered an adulteress even if she marries another man.

Now let's see how Paul applies it to the Christian experience beginning in verse 4 which says this <sup>4</sup>**Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.** Just as a woman is free from the law of marriage if her husband dies so also you and I as we die with Christ to our old sinful nature are then free to be married to another...So again the old man is gone in Christ, the old relationship we had with Adam and his sinful nature have died as the Spirit put it to death in Jesus and in a spiritual sense we have died to the law, it no longer governs us.

Now what I love here is the idea that Paul conveys that we are now married to Jesus...The Bible speaks often of the fact that we who are in Christ known as the church are the bride of Christ...There is a closeness that we have that is closer than any other relationship we have in this world.

I think often times we as believers miss out on the closeness we can have with our Savior...You know I can honestly say that Jesus is by far my best friend...He listens to me every time I talk to Him, He ministers

to my heart and says just what I need to hear, He challenges me and encourages me and I wonder today how many of us have discovered the greatness of being close to Jesus?

**Did you know the Lord wants to be near to you?** Sadly I think we can often shut out the Lord's work in our hearts and minds...whether it be from a sinful activity we continue to engage in or we just have a self reliant heart that says I can do this without any help or we are just too lazy to invest in our relationship with Jesus.

Not only does Jesus want us to know that in Him we have an extremely close relationship, but we also see here in verse 4 that now we can bear fruit unto God. Did you know that if you are in Christ the expectation is that you will live a life that will bear spiritual fruit unto God?

We often forget that Jesus not only died to set us free but also to give us life and to give it to us more abundantly and in that we should be displaying the fruits of knowing God...We might think of the fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, long suffering and so forth...Our lives should be regularly displaying fruit unto the world around us.

I believe this close relationship we now have with Jesus is best described in John 15:4-8 which says <sup>4</sup>**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

<sup>5</sup>**"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is**

withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

To sum this up...the law no longer has a hold on our lives the way it used to as we have died to the law in Christ...now we are free to be married to Christ and to live unto Him bearing much fruit.

Verse 5 builds on this when it says <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. Previously we were held captive to sin and the passions that were aroused within us because of that sin...and what came from that was death and eternal damnation.

Before Christ if you remember we have said there was no hope and there was no freedom...The law was powerless to save us as our failure to keep it in its entirety means we are without hope.

Verse 6 says <sup>6</sup> 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.

So this is incredible news is it not? We no longer live under the law but instead we have died to it and we now get to serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old ways.

The simple truth is that we used to live for self, we used to try to please God based on what we could accomplish and so many people today as they go through life are relying on their works and abilities to



please God never realizing that the fruit of a life that is trying to please God by keeping rules will never give them access to heaven.

Now though in Christ we serve in the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter or the law...IN other words our entire relationship with Jesus is different now than it ever was before. In ourselves we could never please God but in the Spirit as we are born into Jesus we now get to serve and honor the Lord by the power of the Spirit that lives in us.

I think you and I should say AMEN to this for there is hope that we can live life properly before the Lord...We can bear fruit in our lives...we should all want this...and yet the question becomes HOW DO I DO THIS? And we'll see Paul address this here in a little bit.

Look with me at the first part of verse 7 which says this <sup>7</sup>**What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law.** Now some might be listening to the letter Paul wrote and they may come to the conclusion that if the law cannot give life and the law must be died to in Christ then the law must be something bad...that the law is sinful so to say or that it serves no purpose.

Paul though says no way the law isn't sinful in fact if the law didn't exist Paul says I would not have known what sin was...So we have talked about this on numerous occasions here in our study of Romans but the law is perfect, it is holy, it shows the standards of God...but it was not given to us that we might find eternal life...Instead God gave the law to allow sinful man to recognize that he is a sinner that falls short of the glory of God.



If you just look at the 10 commandments of the law you find that all of us fall short...We have all lied, we have all probably taken the name of the Lord in vain, we have all had idols of some sort in our lives (though they may not be little gods...we do have the gods of money and fame and fortune we worship) or we might even say well yes at some point I have been disobedient to my parents.

So the law points out our failures and makes us accountable to God and really its designed to bring us to Jesus as Galatians 3:24-25 says when it says <sup>24</sup>**Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** <sup>25</sup>**But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.** Once we come to Christ the law has done its job.

Now look at what Paul says in the rest of verse 7 and go through verse 12 which say **For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”** <sup>8</sup>**But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.** **For apart from the law sin was dead.** <sup>9</sup>**I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.** <sup>10</sup>**And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.** <sup>11</sup>**For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.** <sup>12</sup>**Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**

Here Paul gives us a personal example of how the law did what it was supposed to do in his life...if you think about Paul we might remember what he had to say about himself over in Philippians 3:4-6 which says the following <sup>4</sup>**though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more**

**so: <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**

So before Paul came to Christ this is who he was...he was self-righteous, he considered himself to be blameless when it came to keeping the law, he was circumcised when he was supposed to be...in his mind in every way he was a man that kept the law and did what was right...He was a self righteous man for sure and I can only imagine He thought himself to be better than others.

As Paul went through life though and commentators debate when exactly this took place but as Paul experienced life he came face to face with his own failures at some point in that he realized he was a man that coveted what others had...in other words he saw things others had and desired to have it in a sinful way...you could say he lusted after what others were blessed with.

So Paul realized at some point he had a failure in his life and it was that he was covetous and this is an interesting portion of the 10 commandments...it's the last of the commandments given to Moses but if you think about it covetousness is something that is internal...the other commandments are by and large outward actions while this was an internal condition of the heart.

I would mention that Jesus on the sermon on the mount really took the law and made it far more internal rather than external for many said "well I haven't slept with a woman in my life so I'm not an adulteress" Jesus though said if you even lust in your heart after another you have sinned.

So Paul realized he was covetous in his life and he says here that sin took the opportunity to produce all kinds of evil desires in his life...That's how sin works doesn't it...I mean just think of little kids when you tell them not to do something...they are going to be tempted to do just that because the sinful nature gets all riled up in them...so it is for adults when they see rules and regulations we start to say well why can't I go fishing here in this lake, or why can't I cross this person's property line and walk in their woods...The sinful nature always wants us to do what is wrong.

Paul thought at one point in his life that he was good to go, that he was perfect in a sense that he had kept all the rules and regulations of God but sin took advantage causing him to fall and thus Paul was under the sentence of death...the law was to bring life but instead it brought condemnation...the law is good, perfect and pleasing to God but the sinful nature of man takes the good that God gives and tramples it...and the just penalty for all lawbreakers is separation from God.

Now one final comment here as we look at this text...in verse 7 you might notice Paul uses the pronoun WE but then notice right after that Paul begins to speak of himself over and over again...In chapter 7 I want you to just take note that Paul speaks of himself using the pronoun I well over 30 times.

It's all about Paul and him trying to please God and do what is right and he is doing it all in his own strength and all in his own will...and we'll see that Paul just couldn't do it try as he might.

Look with me at verse 13 which says this <sup>13</sup>Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin

**through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.** This is kind of like a summary statement by Paul...Some might say the law is a bad thing or that it shouldn't be used in life but Paul says no way instead the law exposes sin, it produces death and it makes it known that in no way shape or form is being right with God found by a person trying to do what is right...Doing what is right is not a bad thing, we should strive for it but make sure you know that being right with God is not found by keeping the commands of God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 we have seen many times in our study in Romans but it says this **<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not of works, lest anyone should boast.** Salvation is found when we simply receive Jesus based on His accomplishments on our behalf as done on the cross...not by works, or our goodness but by faith in the Son of God.

Ok so Paul has laid this all out here the last few chapters...and you and I should be excited because we are no longer under the law but under grace...and we should have a desire to serve and honor God and do what is right...and we have all we need in the Holy Spirit to do so...and yet we are going to see here that this is easier said than done.

And even the great apostle Paul is going to simply say here that he tried to do what was right and he just couldn't do it no matter how hard he worked at it...he found himself failing and making mistakes.

So let's see what Paul discovered in this if you look at verses 14-15 which say this **<sup>14</sup>For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup>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.** So Paul says that the law is a spiritual thing, it's a

good thing...and even though Paul knew all this he still found that he chose to live in the carnal life and that he himself was sold under sin.

Now this might be a little alarming to you as you hear this as Paul the one responsible for nearly half of the New Testament is here in this passage of scripture saying he failed, that he fell short of what God wanted for him and it seems from this passage of scripture that he had a sin of some sort perhaps the sin of covetousness that he regularly fell into.

Paul says I don't understand why I find myself wanting to do something and yet not doing it...and even engaging in something that he hates.

Perhaps you are here today and you can fully understand where Paul spoke of in his life...I know there was a time in my life that I had a mighty battle between doing what was right as a believer in Jesus and choosing to do what was wrong.

**And I hated myself for it when I failed**, I tried and tried and tried some more to find victory in my life over the things I knew I shouldn't do and yet I found over and over again that I fell short...I would actually choose to do the very things I hated and I would choose to do the very things that put Jesus upon the cross.

If you have ever found yourself in this place in life then you fully know what Paul is talking about. And you know that when you fail in that particular area of your life that you feel terrible about it, you are convicted about it and you have probably made promises to God that you are never going to do it again and you have probably said a million times I am never going back down that road again...and yet you like

Paul and like myself and like probably every other Christian that has had a particular sin struggle in their life have found that no matter how much effort you put into it...YOU FAILED.

I have good news for you if you are in this place in your life today...Jesus doesn't want you to stay there, He does want you to have victory, you can leave sin behind...you just won't ever find it in your own strength.

Let's develop this here as Paul continues in verses 16-18 which say

**<sup>16</sup> If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup> But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> 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.**

Paul recognizes that when he chooses to sin its not because he wants to any longer but because sin still has a place in his life...and I want you to just recognize something here and it's the frame of mind that changes when we are in Christ.

I want you to think about the sin that you struggle with currently or the sin you used to struggle with as a believer...and I want you to think about how it was before you came to Jesus and how that sin just dominated and destroyed your life...and then think about how your mind and heart changed after you came to Christ...You began to dislike that sin you used to embrace whole heartedly, you began to recognize it didn't belong in your life and your heart attitude about it changed in that you wanted it out...I want you to just see that the relationship to sin changed when you came to Jesus...and for Paul it was the same, he no longer wanted to tolerate that sin and he set out



to see it gone...but for Paul just like us we go about it the wrong way...we try to do it in our strength and our abilities and from our will and simply said that won't work and that's what Paul is alluding to here in our text.

You might underline verse 18 as Paul says in me nothing good dwells...that's a good place to be...to realize that in you there is no strength or ability to honor God and do what is right...and notice Paul says but **HOW TO PERFORM THAT WHICH IS GOOD I DO NOT FIND!**

The desire to do what is right was present with Paul but he had no strength to perform what he wanted to do...Perhaps that is you today, perhaps you are failing in your life, perhaps you have given up on seeing a particular sin removed from your life...I am here today to tell you that victory can be yours, but you must find the ability to have that victory outside of yourself.

**Verses 19-20 say <sup>19</sup>For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.**

Paul found that the desire to do good was there, but the evil was right there as well and that as he tried and tried to find victory he could not do it but instead he practiced what was wrong...sin still dwelled within him...and while sin was no longer his master he could not find the victory over it.

I want you to hear me when I say this to you this morning...I believe there is a large sum of Christians that never move past Romans 7 in their walk with Jesus...I believe many live in a defeated state of sinful behaviors and attitudes...and I admit it is very hard when you find



yourself here in this place of trying to fight against your flesh and find the victory...but if you can grab these next few verses you will find yourself entering into the Spirit filled life of victory in Christ.

Look at verses 21-23 which say <sup>21</sup>I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. <sup>23</sup>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.

The desire to do good was present with Paul but he found himself in a battle that was warring against his mind and that battle was the battle of the flesh and the Spirit of God living inside of him...**We all must face our flesh as believers in Jesus**...the flesh must be put to death but finding the ability to do so is at times difficult and it is a process we must work through...so many just give up in the process and of course your flesh loves that doesn't it? Because it has gotten what it wants...but I am here today to tell you Jesus wants holiness in your life and He wants you to break through the struggles of your flesh into the glorious life of the Spirit.

You don't have to be captive forever to your flesh...but you will have to put it to death...and chapter 8 will teach us how to do so.

Let's look at verses 24-25 as we close today and it says this <sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>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.

Over 30 times we see Paul saying I tried to do what was right, I failed over and over, I did that which I hated, I agreed with what was good but couldn't find the ability to perform what I should be doing...and then notice the conclusion Paul came to in verse 24...O wretched man that I am!

You know I have to say something here that may be hard to grab hold of but when you come to the place in your life that you have used all your resources and you have exhausted all your abilities and you have tried over and over in your life to remove sin from your life and you come to the point that you have nothing left and you realize that you are a wretch and have no strength, I believe it is music to the ears of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Because when we become desperate for deliverance from the sinful nature it will bring us to the end of ourselves and we will look around and say there is nothing else to give or try and notice what Paul said as he came to the end of himself as he said WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH?

Paul says I can't do it, I don't have it in me and as He sought Jesus on the matter I like to think this was a prayer that Paul prayed saying "LORD WHO CAN DO THIS THROUGH MY LIFE?"

And then Paul gives us the power and the answer to our difficulties as he says that the one that saves us is Jesus Christ...I really want to impress this upon our hearts this morning that you and I have no ability to overcome our flesh in our own strength.

We can't do it no matter how hard we try...and we need to realize we can't do it and we need to come to this place in our lives that we are

realizing that it is only in Jesus that we are going to find the victory over our flesh.

One of the greatest lessons we must learn as believers is that we have nothing in ourselves and that any good in our lives, any fruit that comes from us unto God is wrought by the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us.

Some of you here today are trying to fight your flesh with your own strength and your own abilities...and really you need to surrender to Jesus, you need to connect with the Holy Spirit, you need to abide in Jesus and find your strength in Him and as you do so...this is when you find victory in your life.

As we close today I want you to know that victory over sin can be yours as you walk in the Holy Spirit recognizing you have nothing in yourself...maybe you are here today and you have been trying and trying and trying to leave a particular struggle behind in your life...maybe you drink regularly and you can't seem to stop, maybe pornography is an issue that needs to go, maybe you have a streak of anger in your life the Lord wants to be gone, maybe you find yourself coveting what others have and you don't...Jesus wants to take that from you today...He wants you to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit who lives inside of you.

Today I do feel led of the Lord to just ask if you are here today and you know you need to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh and you are struggling with something in particular in your life that you desire to be set free from that you would stand where you are...and I'm going to just pray over you this morning and ask the Lord to work by His Spirit in your heart and life.

Let's pray and we'll worship.

## **Romans 7:1-25 "No Strength In Ourselves"**

### **Cross References**

#### **Verse 4**

John 15:4-8

#### **Verse 7**

Galatians 3:24-25

#### **Verses 7-12**

Philippians 3:4-6

#### **Verse 13**

Ephesians 2:8-9