



# First Baptist Church Selmer

TRANSFORMED: FROM DEATH TO LIFE TO ABUNDANT LIFE • PERSONAL DISCOVERY •  
ROMANS 7:14-25 • 7/21/2024

## MAIN POINT

The transformation in the life of a believer helps us to recognize our continued battle with sin but with great assurance of victory from it for all eternity.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is one task that you've wanted to complete or one hobby that you've wanted to master that you've never actually gotten around to doing?**

**What is it that has prevented you from succeeding?**

Depending on the complexity of the task or hobby, the process of mastering it can be lifelong. In fact, it might feel like you take two steps back for every one step forward. Sometimes growing in Christ can feel like that. Even though we were made brand new by Jesus, we still battle with sin, and the process of growing in holiness is a lifelong pursuit.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 7:14-16.

*14 "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good." (ESV)*

## **What does Paul's inner battle tell us about ourselves?**

### **Can you relate to Paul's statement: I do not understand what I do? How do you usually respond to that feeling?**

A Christian is aware of a much higher calling and a far better and more honorable way of living. To fall short of that lofty calling creates a sense of loss and disappointment not possible for someone apart from Christ. *"I do not understand what I am doing"* reflects Paul's despair at continuing to battle sin when he had been shown a better way. He could see where he wanted to go in service and in his spiritual maturity, but he was not able to attain it.

### **What do we communicate to God when we try to battle sin on our own?**

### **Why isn't it realistic for us as believers to think we can live the Christian life without struggling against sin?**

Unfortunately, becoming a Christian doesn't completely destroy the sin natures we were born with. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus delivered us from the penalty and the power of sin, but not sin's presence. Until we get our glorified bodies in heaven, we won't be free from sin's presence.

### **How is our struggle with sin actually an indication of spiritual growth?**

Being aware of sin is only the first step. We do not want to stay at awareness only. We must take action to confess, to repent, and to limit circumstances that lead us to sin. In this way, we can increase our availability to God and become ever more useful to Him.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 7:17-23.

*17 "So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." (ESV)*

### **What did Paul mean when he said sin was living inside him?**

## **How can Christians have sin living in them?**

When sin is allowed to remain in a Christian's life, it can take on a life of its own. By the use of very strong language, Paul was trying to indicate sin can usurp even a Christian's life, becoming so active it is sin living in a believer. These words are a frightening reminder of the seriousness of sin. Sin is destructive. It cannot be benignly accepted as simply a part of life, but it must be identified and dealt with appropriately.

### **What two laws does Paul reference in verses 21-23?**

### **What are the key differences between these two laws?**

### **What is the battle between these two laws like for you?**

Here Paul uses the law motif to illustrate from another angle the conflict he experiences. Two laws are mentioned: *"the law of my mind"* (his desire to obey God's law), and *"the law of sin"* (that which wars against the law of his mind). He states a principle by which these two laws conflict with one another: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. Even the desire to do good becomes an occasion for temptation. The desire to be useful to God inevitably attracts unwanted attention from the powers of darkness. Christians struggle with the tension of already and not yet. We already have been delivered from sin and are dead to its full power, but we are not yet completely immune to its lure. Engaging in this struggle, instead of easily giving in, is the means by which God builds spiritual muscle in us.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 7:24-25.

*24 "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin." (ESV)*

### **What was Paul's frame of mind in verse 24? Have you ever been there?**

When we feel a strong obligation to serve God faithfully and recognize how far short we so often fall, then we are able to share Paul's distress in this verse. *"Wretched man that I am"* reflects an accurate appraisal of a man who saw his sin in light of God's holiness. This man had glimpsed the divine heights and sensed the depth of the valley in which he struggled. Guilt and shame may accompany this cry, but that is not where God wants us

to stay. *“Who will deliver me?”* is asked by one who already knows the answer. Paul had felt the sting of indictment, agreed his actions are wrong, and was looking for a solution.

**In the midst of Paul’s frustrating struggle, what was Paul’s hope?**

**How can this hope become more than just words we say?**

Jesus Christ our Lord is the spiritual security to which Christians must return quickly. We are not to wallow in guilt, and we are not to embrace it. But when something is wrong, we must confront the sin maturely and turn to Christ for immediate help. This declaration of faith is the substance of Paul’s theology in general and of this letter in particular. Jesus Christ will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We always must turn to Him.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In the battle with sin, what roles do Scripture, prayer, and close relationships with other believers play?**

**As believers, how can we help each other fight this battle?**

**Why do we need to take such a severe attitude toward our sin? What are some practical ways we can fight the temptations we face?**

## PRAYER

As a closing prayer time, divide up into couples or small groups and share about how you are dealing with the struggles of this life. As you pray for each person in your group, pray specifically that our outward obedience to God will align with the inward joy of our salvation.

## COMMENTARY

| ROMANS 7:14-25

Paul opened chapter 7 with an illustration of the meaning of being dead to sin and free from the law’s condemning power. In marriage, a woman is bound to her husband only as long as he is alive. If he dies, she is then free. Similarly, Christians are dead to and free from sin; but they belong to another—that is, to Christ. We are set free from the power of

the law and can now serve God in the new way of the Spirit. The idea of becoming free from the law naturally raises some questions. If Christians have died to the law, then what good purpose does the law serve? Paul answered that the law makes us aware of our sinfulness. It diagnoses the spiritual problem. Therefore, the law is not bad; rather it is good and holy.

7:14. Paul's argument would often leave him open to a charge he undervalued the law and, in fact, made it something that was evil. That is not the case. In verse 7 the apostle had affirmed the law is not sin but it helps us identify the problem of sin. The law makes us aware of our sinfulness. Paul emphasized the goodness of the law again here in verse 14 by affirming the law is spiritual. The law, which provides moral direction for life, comes from God. It represents His holiness. Those who embrace only the law, however, and attempt to achieve righteousness through the law find that such efforts always lead to death.

If believers have been freed from sin (the cause of death) and the law is spiritual, then why do we still struggle with sin? Here Paul introduced a new factor—the telling factor—to the discussion. We still struggle with sin as believers because we are still made out of flesh. In Christ, our inner, spiritual nature has been redeemed and made alive, but we also still exist in our fleshly nature. It is our fleshly nature, Paul taught, that continues to struggle with sin's power.

7:15-16. Oftentimes, believers face a frustrating reality in which despite our best efforts, we fail to live for God as we want to do and instead do the things we hate. Our "want to's" are lined up with God's Word, but our fleshly nature still tugs us toward sin. Paul explained that this inner struggle in which our actions go one way while our "want to's" pull us toward God's Word is one more piece of evidence that the law is good. Paul's revulsion at sin is an affirmation that the law . . . is good. Again, the law serves the function of revealing sin. In this regard it is good. As a means of salvation, however, it is completely inadequate.

7:17. Interestingly, to struggle against sin also serves to confirm a believer's salvation is genuine. Unbelievers well might live as good citizens by obeying the nation's civil laws, but they don't struggle against sin. They are in bondage to sin and are spiritually dead (see Eph. 2:1). The believer, on the other hand, can truthfully say, *"I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me."* Such a statement should not be misunderstood as a skirting of accountability. Rather, it reflects that genuine believers never want to sin and do not

make plans to sin. We falter, however, when we yield to the tug of sin's power remaining in our fleshly nature.

7:18-19. Thus the struggle believers have against sin is caused by the continuing influence of sin through the fleshly nature. We have the desire to (always) do what is good, but not the ability. Too often we fail to do the good we want to do and instead practice the evil that we don't want to do. Paul's behavior bewildered and frustrated him. The tense of practice indicates an ongoing struggle.

7:20. Paul reiterated the conclusion he stated in 7:17. Christians' continuing struggle with temptation is not because God's law is faulty or because believers want to sin. The problem is sin itself. Sin's influence continues to reside in the fleshly nature. In Romans 8, Paul assured his readers that one day God will free believers from even that problem (see 8:23). At this point, however, he was carefully continuing his argument that the law, although good and holy, offers no solution to the struggle against sin. A new solution was necessary (see 7:6). Paul's carefully paced explanation of the believer's struggle with sin easily can leave the reader aching for a word of hope.

7:21. As a result of his conversion and God's subsequent revelation of truth to him, Paul had come to understand a principle at work in believers' lives. The Greek word translated principle is *nomos*, which also can be translated as law. However, Paul was not referring here to discovering divine truth or Scripture but to understanding better the day-to-day experience of Christian living. In particular, he had come to understand that the Christian life was not automatic moral perfection but rather a struggle between one's desire to do what is good and the continuing reality of evil.

7:22-23. Old Testament writers and characters rejoiced in God's law (see particularly Ps. 119). Paul obviously concurred with this assessment as the words I joyfully agree with God's law indicate. Paul's agreement was in his inner self, a term that coincides with "*mind*," as will be clear in the following verse. In effect, there are two competing laws at work constantly in believers' lives. One is God's law, which we as Christians joyfully agree with in our heart of hearts. We know it is perfect, holy, and more desirable than any treasure (see Ps. 19:7-11). However, a different law still holds sway in our fleshly nature. The result of these two laws working at odds in the believer is nothing less than spiritual warfare (waging war). Pitched battles occur every time believers know God's will and want to follow through in obedience, for obedience is what God looks for in His people (see John 14:15; Jas. 1:22; 1 John 2:3-5).

7:24. Paul could delay no longer in giving voice to the desperate cry arising out of a believer's struggle with sin. "What a wretched man I am!" he exclaimed. The spiritual conflict is real and intense for all who take seriously their Christian faith and life. Paul continued by asking, "Who will rescue me from this dying body?" The body is the old sinful nature that wars against our mind, which is set on living in obedience to God. Take note that Paul did not ask "what" could rescue him but "Who."

7:25. Paul thanked God for providing the means of rescue for struggling believers: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Two opposing principles will always be at work in believers as long as we are in the flesh. However, because of Jesus' death and resurrection we now can live without fear of condemnation and in the power of the Spirit (see 8:1-2). Thus we can always depend on God to help us against sin and give us victory over it.