## Romans 7 Study Guide

Romans 7 continues Paul's argument from Romans 6. Believers have been freed from sin's dominion and are no longer "under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Paul now explains why the Law, though holy and good, cannot rescue us from sin.

The Law can reveal what is right, but it cannot give us the power to do it. Romans 7 also exposes the continuing struggle with sin — the painful reality that even knowing and desiring what is right does not, by itself, produce obedience. That tension drives Paul to his question, "Who will deliver me?" and ultimately to the answer found in Christ and the Spirit (Romans 7:24–25; 8:1–4).

**1. What is Paul teaching through the illustration of marriage? (Romans 7:1–6)**

Paul uses marriage to explain that death changes a person's relationship to the law that once bound them. In the same way, believers have "become dead to the law through the body of Christ" so that they may belong to the risen Christ and "bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4).

Paul is not saying God's moral truth has become meaningless. He is saying our standing with God is no longer based on trying to establish righteousness through the Law (Romans 3:20–22).

**Everyday Application:** Christianity is not simply exchanging one set of rules for another. We belong to Christ, and obedience grows out of that relationship.

**2. If the Law cannot save us, is the Law itself sinful? (Romans 7:7)**

Paul immediately answers, "Certainly not!" The Law is not the problem. Sin is.

Paul says, "I would not have known sin except through the law," and uses coveting as an example (Romans 7:7; Exodus 20:17). The Law identifies what sin is and exposes desires that might otherwise be excused.

Paul later says plainly that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12).

**Everyday Application:** God's Word sometimes makes us uncomfortable because it exposes what we would rather excuse. Conviction is not evidence that God's standard is bad; it may be evidence that we are finally seeing ourselves clearly.

**3. How can sin use something good, like God's commandment, for evil? (Romans 7:8–11)**

Paul says sin "seizing the opportunity by the commandment" produced sinful desire in him (Romans 7:8). The command does not create the sinful heart, but rebellion can react against the command itself.

James helps explain this inward process. He says God does not tempt anyone; rather, "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (James 1:13–14). Desire, when entertained, gives birth to sin, and sin ultimately brings death (James 1:15).

So the problem is not God's Law. The problem is the sinful desire within us that resists or twists what is good.

**Everyday Application:** Temptation often gains power where it connects with something we already desire. Wisdom means recognizing that desire early, before it grows into action.

**4. What is the purpose of the Law if it cannot make us righteous? (Romans 7:12–13)**

The Law reveals the true character of sin. Paul says sin used what was good to produce death so that "sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful" (Romans 7:13).

This connects directly to Romans 3:20: "by the law is the knowledge of sin." The Law acts like a light. It does not create the dirt; it shows us what is there.

That exposure prepares us to understand why we need grace and righteousness from God through Christ (Romans 3:21–24).

**Everyday Application:** We should let Scripture expose us rather than simply using it to evaluate other people. God's Word helps us see what needs repentance, grace, and change in our own lives.

**5. What does Paul mean when he says, "What I will to do, that I do not practice"? (Romans 7:14–17)**

Paul describes a painful conflict: he recognizes what is right, yet finds himself doing what he hates (Romans 7:15). Knowledge of what is right is not enough by itself to produce righteousness.

That reinforces the larger argument of Romans. The Law can tell us what is good, but it cannot by itself give us the power to become good (Romans 7:18).

Christ similarly teaches that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

**Everyday Application:** Knowing the right thing does not guarantee we will do it. Spiritual maturity requires more than information; it requires dependence on God and deliberate obedience.

**6. What does Romans 7 teach about the reality of the believer's struggle with sin? (Romans 7:18–20)**

Paul says, "To will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Romans 7:18). He describes a real conflict between desiring good and experiencing the pull of sin.

Christians differ over whether Romans 7:14–25 describes primarily Paul before conversion, Paul as a believer, or Paul speaking representatively about life under the Law. But the passage clearly shows that human desire and Law alone cannot conquer sin.

Romans 8 provides Paul's answer: believers need the work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:2–4, 13).

**Everyday Application:** Struggling with sin should not lead us to complacency, but neither should it surprise us. The answer is not merely stronger willpower; it is deeper dependence on Christ and the Spirit.

**7. What are the competing forces Paul describes within himself? (Romans 7:21–23)**

Paul says that when he wants to do good, evil is present with him (Romans 7:21). He delights in God's law "according to the inward man," yet sees another principle at work in his members pulling him toward sin (Romans 7:22–23).

This fits Romans 6, where believers are told not to let sin reign and not to present themselves to sin (Romans 6:12–13). The commands matter precisely because the struggle is real.

Paul is not saying temptation removes responsibility. He is showing how deeply the pull of sin can work against what we know and desire to be right.

**Everyday Application:** The presence of temptation does not mean we must surrender to it. Recognizing the conflict early allows us to choose deliberately what we will obey.

**8. Where does Paul finally look for deliverance? (Romans 7:24–25)**

Paul reaches the breaking point:

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"
— **Romans 7:24 NKJV**

Notice that the question is **"Who?"**, not merely "What rule?" or "What technique?" His answer is:

"I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"
— **Romans 7:25 NKJV**

The Law can identify the problem, and human will can desire something better, but deliverance comes through Christ. Romans 8 immediately continues the thought: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

**Everyday Application:** Our deepest hope is not that we will become disciplined enough to rescue ourselves. We fight sin seriously, but we do so while depending on the Deliverer — Jesus Christ.

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**Closing Thought**

Romans 7 fits naturally into Paul's larger argument:

**Romans 1–3:** Paul strips away our self-righteousness.
**Romans 3–5:** God gives us righteousness through Christ.
**Romans 6:** Grace does not excuse continued sin.
**Romans 7:** Knowing what is right does not eliminate the struggle with sin.
**Romans 8:** Victory is found in Christ and life through the Spirit.

The Law exposes sin but cannot cure it. Human desire and willpower are not enough. **Victory over sin is found in Christ and the Spirit.**