

Dig Deeper on Romans 7:7-25 for personal reading and Life Groups...



ROMANS 7:7-25 IN TROUBLE WITH THE LAW?

The problem is not the commandments it's you!

V7-13 In the unbeliever, the law identifies and stimulates sin in me

➔ **Do you realise that the way to God is not by being good? Cry to Jesus!**

V14-25 In the believer, the law shows me what I should do, but I battle

➔ **Do you realise that you are totally normal? Keep waging war on sin and keep crying out to Jesus!**



CHRIST CHURCH
HUNTINGDON



Here are some questions to help dig further into Romans 7:7-25...

1. As a recap, look back to 7:1-3. What is the point that Paul is making? How do you think Christians today might be tempted “go back to their old spouse” in the form of practically living by ‘lawkeeping’ rather than living by the gospel? What is the antidote?
2. Can you articulate why the 10 commandments are such a good thing (v12,14)? So what is the ‘problem’ with the law (v8-11)? Have you got any examples in your life of how having a clear commandment actually incited you to sin more?
3. Suppose a friend is taking an interest in Christianity for the first time, they start coming to church, their life seems to begin to change, but then they lose all interest saying that they aren’t good enough. How would you seek to help them?
4. Can you relate to Paul’s experiences in v14-24? Why would you say it’s a good sign when someone is bothered by their sin? How can you encourage a battling Christian? How can we practically make sure that we help each other in the fight? (See also Galatians 5:13-25). Turn v24-25 into a prayer!

(Optional, or in your own time... Do you agree that the first half of this passage (v7-13) speaks of the experiences of an unbeliever and that the second half (v14-25) those of a believer? See over the page for summary of arguments. Would it make a difference to you if the interpretation is otherwise? Why not pray the prayer over the page at the bottom?)

Some resources

- See **over the page** for a summary of the arguments for and against these words being the cry of a Christian and some more resources.
- 45 min **Podcast** on what it means to be “in Christ”. Rory Shiner & Kyle Worley: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/deep-dish/union-christ-matters/>
- **Overview** of Romans at Bibleproject.com [here](#) and [here](#).

Here's a little summary of some of the interpretations of Romans 7 and their arguments (plus my opinions in **red**)...

Who is the "I" in Romans 7:7-12?

1. It's Paul before he's a Christian.
 - a. This makes most sense of the past tense eg "produced in me every kind of coveting" (v8).
 - b. Paul is telling his own story
 - c. Sinclair Ferguson¹ even wonders if the witness of Stephen (Acts 6) stirred up a covetousness in him which drove him to conviction of sin and then to Christ. This could explain why he chooses to focus on covetousness from the 10 Commandments in his 'testimony'.
2. It's Adam.
 - a. How could Paul that at any point he was alive "apart from the law" (he's always been a good Jew).
 - b. There's language here reminiscent of Genesis 3. "sin sprang to life and I died".
3. It's Israel.
 - a. It's not Adam because the law (in its strictest sense) didn't come until Mt Sinai with the giving of the law. It's a Jew under law as the gospel comes.

In my opinion 1 is the best fit (the other two rely on reconstructions when neither Adam or Israel are mentioned in the text). It's the interpretation I took in the sermon, but there is a pattern in Paul's experience also mirrored in the garden of Eden in Gen 3.

Who is the "I" in Romans 7:13-25?

1. It's Paul in his present day Christian experience (see John Piper [here](#), also JI Packer "Keep in Step" p263f).
 - a. He's speaking as "I" and in the present tense.
 - b. V25b shows that there's still a conflict for the person in v25a **also** delivered by Jesus!
2. It's Paul speaking in vivid terms (present tense) but describing his former life as an unbeliever (Schreiner [here](#)).
 - a. It flows on from the first half describing his pre-Christian thinking.
 - b. How else could Paul say that he's "sold as a slave to sin" v14 (esp in the light of 6:17,18).
 - c. The Spirit isn't mentioned and Paul seems very defeated v24 and "sold as a slave to sin" v14.
3. It's Paul as a pious Jew who is not yet Spirit dwelt (see John Stott, also see Martin Lloyd Jones [here](#)).
 - a. This also seeks to make sense of the sense of defeat and also lack of Spirit language.
 - b. A Christian can have a worksy attitude that gets "stuck" in a carnal/earthly mindset without dependence on the Spirit.

In my opinion (and as I preached), 1 makes sense of the present tense and the first person singular, "I". This is Paul the Christian in battle. However, we should take seriously that the passage doesn't mention the Spirit, and therefore there is much more to say in the battle of sin, which makes us want to stay tuned for Romans 8.

Where does this leave you?

- **Cold?** "This kind of theological debate doesn't interest me. I'll let others do the hard work". OK, but God has encouraged us to love him with all our mind as well as our heart (Luke 10:27), and preachers can get it wrong, so it's good to use our grey matter with God's help (2 Timothy 2:7)!
- **Frustrated?** "Why isn't the Bible more clear?" Well, even Peter said of some of Paul's letters that they were hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16). The Bible is clear on everything we need to know (what I call the 'main road'), but sometimes we need to swim deep into God's rich Word with God's big help.
- **Confused?** "If Christians cleverer than me, some of whom I've never heard of, have such different understandings of this passage what chance have I got?" Well Romans was written to everyday people (see ch16), some of whom probably didn't have a significant education or deep OT background, but Paul wants them to grasp the big picture too. Focus on verses like v24 and 25 and be encouraged. However we take this section, we end up in a good place through Jesus!
- **Prayerful?** This is probably the best place to be. *"Lord I don't understand all of this, and my little brain has trouble getting it's head around this, but I thank you for the big things that I can be clear on. That despite our sin and worksiness you love us, and have sent Jesus to rescue us. I don't need to work my way to you as I'm released from the law. Having said that I want to please you and reflect your moral character. I am free from sin's rule, but not from it's presence. I know that fighting sin is a real struggle (from Galatians 5:13f - let alone how one interprets this passage). But I'm excited about what I'm going to learn in Romans 8 about the help that the Spirit brings. Please help me and my brothers and sisters not to get stuck on the details or discouraged by the passage's complexity, but to grow in godliness and to spur one another on in the fight to live for Jesus. Amen".*

¹ Sinclair Ferguson, "Let's Study Romans", Banner of Truth, 2025. This is an excellent new book that I can recommend (and lend).