

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE ARE DOING

Romans 7:5-25

In the letter to the Romans, Paul has written a lot about redemption, righteousness, and justification coming through faith in Jesus who provided, by his blood, propitiation (providing atonement/reparation or payment for our sin –reconciling sinful man with his holy God; 3:22, 24-25).

Paul contrasts salvation by faith with the Law (as given through Moses). Although the Law is holy, just, and good (7:12) because it comes from God, demonstrates God so we know Him, it does not provide the power needed to live dead to sin

Paul tells us that with baptism we:

- Die with Christ

- Rise to “walk in newness of life” (6:4)

- Are no longer slaves to sin, freed from sin (6:6-7)

Romans 7:4 says we die to sin so that we can be married (united) to Jesus who was raised from the dead

Purpose: “that we should bear fruit to God”

Romans 7:5-6

- **Law arouses sinful passions**
 - Bears fruit to death
- **After baptism**
 - Died to Law
 - No longer serve according to the letter
 - Serve by Spirit

The Law aroused sinful desires/passions in us. We know that when we are told not to do something, that is when we want to do it. And the sinful passions work in us to “bear fruit to death,” not the fruit to God that we bear when united with Christ.

After baptism we no longer do things because it is written in a law that we should do it. That is the old way.

Instead we serve in the new way of the Spirit:

- The Spirit guides our actions
- Guides only as we are sensitive and open to Spirit leading
- The Spirit never leads us to actions contrary to God’s Law or commands

Romans 7:7-8

- Law lets us know what is sin according to God
- If there was no Law, nothing would be labelled as wrong, so there would be no sin
- Sin uses commands of the Law to cause us to have “all manner of evil desire”

Romans 7:9-11

- Commandment labelled sinful actions which lead to death
- Law supposed to point to life, but instead it leads to death
- Sin used the opportunity given by the Law to deceive and kill

Romans 7:12

- The Law is good - reflects God and His holy standards
- Problem is Law does not give us power

Despite sin using the Law to bring death to us:

The Law is good because it reflects God and His holy standards. We know Him by the Law which teaches us how to live.

The problem is that the Law does not give us power to follow its commands in righteousness (right living) along with the commands!

Romans 7:13

- Sin brings death
- Sin produces death to demonstrate how terrible sin is

The Law does not bring death, but sin through the Law brings death so we know how abhorrent sin is to God and His holiness.

Romans 7:14-20

	Good	Evil	Conclusion
Mind (Inner Man)	Wants	Hates	Agree Law is right
Flesh (Members)	Doesn't do	Does	Sin lives in me

This chart show the man who is spiritual in his inner man or mind compared to the natural man, the natural bent of the members of our body.

Although our inner man wants to do good and hates evil, by which we agree God's Law is right, our natural bent is not to do what is good, do what is evil. Paul concludes this means that sin lives within us – is the natural condition of man.

Romans 7:14-20

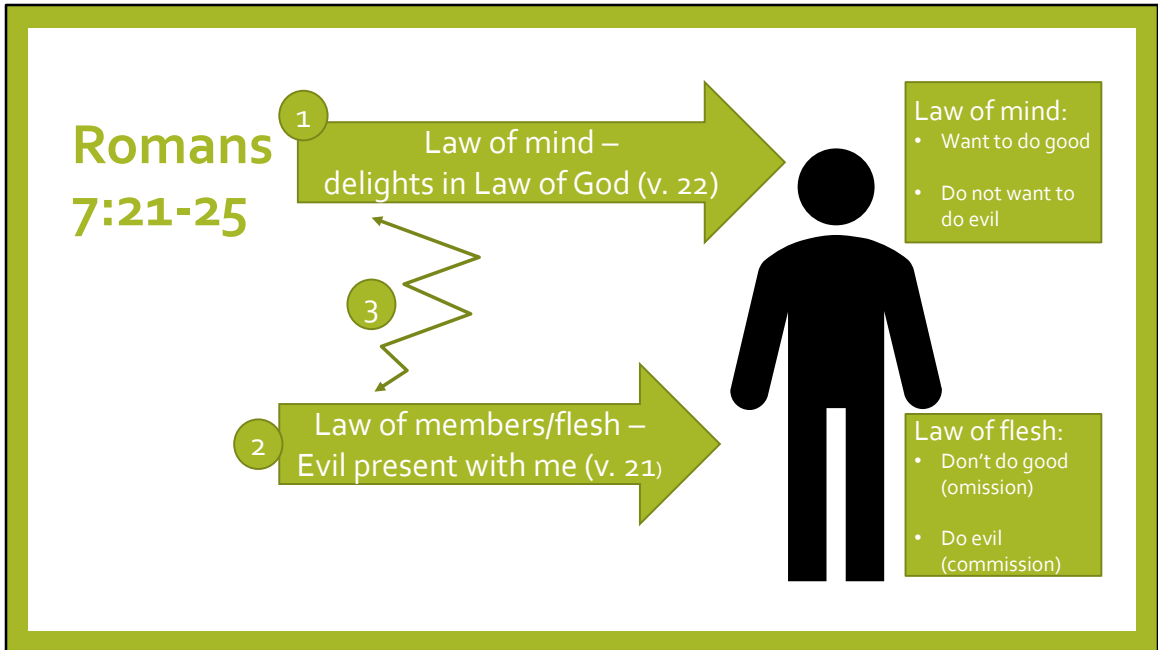
- “how to perform what is good I do not find” (7:18) even though the will to do good is there
- The control to do what is righteous is provided by the mind; our thoughts power self-control

Paul says in verse 18 that there is nothing good in the flesh, but the will to do good exists. But he does not find “how to perform what is good” (7:18).

Will = strong desire or determination; a person’s choice or desire (Merriam-Webster)

Will power = control of one’s impulses and actions; self-control (Dictionary.com)

Although the way we think provides power to be self-controlled, there is more going on that makes us vulnerable to the sin which is our natural bent. There is more that we need. We need God’s Spirit to help us – Paul begins to discuss this in Romans 8.



#1. The law of the mind (inward man) is that we “delight in the law of God” (v. 22). Consider Psalm 119 which is a long Psalm extolling the beauty and benefit of God’s law. Each of us when we are baptized revel in our new cleansed position before God and wish never to sin again. In our mind and our inward self, we want to do good and do not want to do evil.

#2. The law of the flesh is that we want to give in to sin and do evil – not do what is good (sin of omission) and doing what is evil (sin of commission).

We can consider the example of exercising each day (although this is not necessarily an area of sin; it is only to illustrate this idea). With our mind we have resolved to exercise every day, but then comes the day when the body wants to be lazy or comfortable. Which wins? Mind or body?

#3. There is a war between the flesh and the mind, a great struggle. The flesh wants to convince the mind to give in to sin, to once again become captive to sin (v. 23). But we are no longer slaves to sin when we died with Christ in baptism (6:6-7). Throughout this struggle, our minds must continue to “reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:11).

The mind serves the law of God
The flesh serves the law of sin (7:25)

While the flesh wants to bring the mind back into captivity to sin, the mind is to keep the flesh in submission to the righteousness of God.

Romans 7:24

- Wretched condition
- “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:31).

Paul acknowledges that man is in a wretched condition when we sin even though we sincerely do not want to.

Jesus warned us of this very struggle when he counseling his disciples to “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. **The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak**” (Matt. 26:31).

Our inward man, our mind/spirit, truly wants to please God and be righteous before Him, but because the natural bent of our flesh is to sin, its weakness makes us vulnerable to sinning, regardless of our willing spirit.

James 1:14-15

- Desire (Greek *epithumia*) = strong desire and intense craving for something
- Can be used for good desires as well as negative
- Negative uses refer to gratifying sensual cravings, desiring the forbidden, loving for evil, striving for things, persons, experiences contrary to will of God (Spirit Filled Life Bible, NKJV, p. 1855)

We are empowered when we understand what is happening in this great struggle between the law of our mind and the law of our flesh.

Some additional study on temptation as described by James can also equip and enable us to have greater power in the battle against sin.

James describes the progression of temptation to sin by comparing it to a man's life span (see chart, next slide).

Conception ->	Gestation ->	Birth ->	Growth or Maintenance ->	Death
Enticed by desire (contrary to God)	Development of the desire	Sinful act	Continue in sin	Judgment of God
Desire comes to life			If sin in one area, why not sin in another	
Can be something small – just something we see, something someone says, etc.	Consider, dwell on, and nurture desire, look for ways to justify the desire	Satisfy the desire for what is evil	Don't, won't, or can't stop the sin	Too late
Body wants something and idea catches in the mind	War between body and mind (Romans 7:23)	Body brings mind into captivity to sin	Mind completely succumbs to sin and nurtures its growth	No more chances to repent
Pray (Matt 6:13; 26:31; Luke 22:40; James 4:2-3)	Be guided by Spirit (Gal. 5:16)	need for repentance and a return to the narrow path that leads to life	repentance needed to escape captivity to sin	Death spread to all men because all sin (Ro. 5:12)
Be alert (1 Peter 5:7)	Put on armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18)	Repent (Acts 3:19)	Sin shall not have dominion (Ro. 6:14)	Wages of sin is death (Ro. 6:23)
No provision (Ro. 13:14)	Submit to God; Resist the devil (James 4:7)	God commands all the repent (Acts 17:30-31)		
Hide word in heart (Ps. 119:11)				
Resist (1 Peter 5:8); Flee (1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:22)	Take way out (1 Cor 10:13)			
Draw near to God; Purify heart (James 4:8)				

This chart is based on James' analogy of temptation:

Row 1 (under titles) describes what is occurring at each stage of the development or progression of temptation

Row 2 describes our personal experience

Row 3 describes what is happening in our minds and in our flesh

Row 4 gives Scripture that relates to each of the columns. The verses in columns 1 and 2 apply to either the conception stage or the gestation stage.

It is key that we remain alert – temptation can occur at any time, any place, under any circumstances.

PRAY every day, as Jesus taught, “lead us not into temptation” (Matt. 6:13). Solicit God's help in this war.

Know that it is possible flash from desire to sinful act in a moment; conception to

birth is almost instantaneous (example, when we become angry and immediately speak harsh words). Hopefully, when that happens and we didn't completely bring our mind along into captivity to sin, there is immediate regret and repentance. If it becomes a regular way of life, then it travels along the chart to where we maintain or grow that sin.

Avoid temptation as much as possible, but when it comes, deal with it in the conception stage and don't move into gestation where we are considering giving into the temptation. At that point, the mind is playing with the idea of going into captivity to sin again.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (Ro. 6:14).