

The Struggle is Real

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study
Romans 7:15-20

Romans 7:15–20, *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. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that 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.*

- There are two battlefronts in the Christian life regarding sin.
 - There is an external battle. John describes this battle with the “world” in his first letter. (**1 John 2:15–16**, *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*)
- There is an internal battle when it comes to sin.
 - There is a greater battle internal between our new nature and our sinful fallenness. It produces internal strife. This is the fight for personal holiness. **Romans 7:22–23**, *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.*

I. Sin is a mystery (Romans 7:15a)

- A. *“I do not understand my own actions.”* (note this is present tense) Why do I still sin? I have a new heart, new affections, new life, and yet still sin. It is confusing to Paul and to us.
- B. In view of my conversion, I do not understand my sin.
 1. **2 Corinthians 5:17**, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
 - a) Received a new heart.
 - b) Received new affections.
 - c) Received eternal life.
 2. **Romans 6:4**, *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*
 - a) It is a perplexing mystery why we still sin. Why do I still live like this? Why do I get drawn in to sin? Why do I fall for the trap?

II. Sin is a contradiction (7:15b)

- A. *I do not do what I want* {strong desire; crave; wish for}, *but I do the very thing I hate* {scorn; abhor; detest}. (O-mission and Co-mission)
- B. We desire obedience and holiness to please our Father, but we often fail to do so.
 1. We have a new appetite and eat the wrong things.
 2. We have a new nature and are attracted to the wrong things.
 3. John Calvin, “...it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.”⁶ For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy—this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of

our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity.”¹

III. Sin is a legal offense (7:16)

- A. Sin is lawlessness (transgression – open defiance; rebellion against the King) **1 John 3:4**, *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.*
- B. Though sin has been defeated, there is still sin in us. It is not a problem with the Law.
- C. How do we know that we are still sinful?
 - 1. Paul’s Agreement – To consent to a condition, agree to terms; assent to perform duties.
 - 2. The law is good
 - a) **Galatians 3:24**, *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*
 - (1) **Guardian - moral caretaker** — a person appointed to watch over a young child, train his public behavior, and keep him safe in public; perhaps with the fuller understanding of a tutor.
 - (2) Christ – is now our standard as a fulfillment of the Law. Gaze on Him.
 - b) **James 1:23–25**, *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

IV. Sin is an indwelling force (7:17)

- A. *So now*,
 - 1. *It is no longer* – not for any more time; permanent; not one moment.
 - 2. *I* – Paul’s new transformed person (nature). (Galatians 2:20)
 - 3. *But sin that dwells within me* – Sin is like a deposed leader; exiled; no longer reigning but still present.
 - 4. **Galatians 5:17**, *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*
- B. The Retention of fallenness.
 - 1. This is the war within us. It is indicative of a radical change.
 - 2. Paul is not passing the buck on his sin. He is teaching us a point.

V. Sin is a contrary power (7:18)

- A. Sin still resides in our flesh and is powerful; contrary to our new nature
- B. No common ground between sin and the new nature.
- C. *For I know* – absolute certainty.
- D. *My flesh* – deeply personal
- E. *No good dwells in me* - wicked – evil – carnal – vile.

VI. Sin is a competing evil (7:19)

- A. New “want to’s”
- B. *Evil* – morally objectional behavior.
- C. Sin’s reign has ended; however, it still has influence!

VII. Sin is a remaining reality (7:20)

- A. The real Paul does not sin; it is sin that dwells in Paul (us).
- B. We cannot get rid of sin.
- C. *Dwells* – cohabitate; move in; occupy; permanent house guest.

¹ Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* & 2. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Vol. 1. The Library of Christian Classics. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.