

## Romans 7 The Struggle with Sin and the Law

### **Text**

<sup>1</sup>Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup>For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. <sup>3</sup>So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

<sup>4</sup>Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup>For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. <sup>6</sup>But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

<sup>7</sup>What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." <sup>8</sup>But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. <sup>9</sup>I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; <sup>10</sup>and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; <sup>11</sup>for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. <sup>12</sup>So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

<sup>14</sup>For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. <sup>15</sup>For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

<sup>16</sup>But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. <sup>17</sup>So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. <sup>19</sup>For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. <sup>20</sup>But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

<sup>21</sup>I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. <sup>22</sup>For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, <sup>23</sup>but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

<sup>24</sup>Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

### **Key Points in the text**

- Paul uses marriage as a new analogy for being under the law to being under grace.
- Without the Law we would not know our need for a savior.
- Even after being born again, our body of sin is waging war with our spirit of righteousness.

## Text Study

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Paul uses marriage as an image of transition from the Law to the Spirit.

- Just like it is not lawful to be married to two husbands it is not possible to be under the law, and united to Christ
- In order to be married to righteousness, the Law must die.
- Once the law has died we can be united to Christ.
- Remember that the church is the bride of Christ.
- Now that we are married to the source of love we are able to bear the good fruit of righteousness.

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Paul addresses two questions about the law, 'Is the Law itself Sin'? And 'Did the Law cause death?' As well as the underlying question of is God's morality in question in that He made the Law?

Is the Law sin?

- After using an analogy that kind of makes the Law look bad, Paul shows that the law is good as it leads us to repentance or knowledge of our falling short.
- The Law should have shown us how to please God but rather because of our fallen nature it showed us how to anger Him.

Did the Law kill me?

- Again Paul is defending the goodness of the Law.
- Sin is what kills me, both our active and passive sin.

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Paul endeavors to explain why, having been freed from the Law and bound to Christ, we still sin.

- We have a sin nature, which in our sin state tells us to do whatever feels good to us.
- After our rebirth we hate our sin and don't understand why we do it.
- Our very hatred of sin is proof of our rebirth because it shows our agreement with God that the Law is right and sin is bad.
- Now the sin we do is not done by our regenerated spirit, but rather our sinful flesh
- In our spirit we want to do well, but our flesh does not.

Now our spirit cries out to God for help to resist sin and become more like Him. We are in a constant state of war with the flesh, which requires that we have the spirit of God on at all times to do battle.

### **Application**

- Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Do you hate your sin to the point of repentance, crying out like Paul, who will save me from this body of sin?
- Always remember that the same power that is working sanctification in you, was the power that justified you. In other words, remember your past justification so that you can have present peace, knowing that God is working in you unto future glory with Him in heaven.

### **Next Week's Lesson Prep/Preview**

Text: Romans 8:1-17

Focus: Life in the Spirit

Devotional: Matthew 5:17-20

Preparation: Heavenly Adoption

## Heavenly Adoption

By: John MacArthur

From: Grace To You: <https://www.gty.org/blogs/B150626/heavenly-adoption>

Have you ever considered why Scripture encourages us to call God our Father? What eternal truths does that simple title point to, and what does it teach us about the radical change God has wrought in the lives of those who love Him?

We began this series by considering the state of unrepentant man—hopelessly lost in his sin and condemned to suffer the due penalty of his sin. But as we saw, God graciously intervened, transforming His people by grace through faith, and fitting them for righteousness and an eternal home with Him. It's appropriate, then, to conclude this series by considering the glorious reality of redeemed man's new position in Christ.

Specifically, we're going to look at a particular illustration Scripture regularly uses to describe our new relationship with God. In his book *Slave*, John MacArthur describes this beautiful, uplifting analogy:

That God, in His grace, would free us from sin and make us His slaves is a wondrous truth to comprehend. What a privilege to know and obey the heavenly Master! . . . And yet the Lord has bestowed an even greater distinction upon those who are His own.

Having delivered us from the destitution of sin, God not only receives us as His slaves—but He has also welcomed us into His household and made us members of His very family. He not only rescued us, purchased us, befriended us, and took us in; He has also adopted us, thereby transforming those who were formerly children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3) into the sons and daughters of righteousness. All of this is possible through the redemptive work of Christ, who is the “only begotten Son” (John 3:16), and the “firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

The very term adoption is filled with ideas of compassion, kindness, grace, and love. [1]

### A First-Century Illustration

Most of us are familiar with adoption in the twenty-first century—after all it's a relatively common practice. But it wasn't nearly as common in the world of the New Testament. To help us understand the full weight and vivid imagery of the biblical metaphor, John explains what adoption looked like in Roman society.

Though the formal adoption of slaves was somewhat uncommon, it was permissible under Roman law and did occur in certain instances. The extraordinary nature of the practice makes God's adoptive love toward us all the more remarkable—in that He has done the unexpected by adopting all His slaves as His own children and naming us His heirs (Romans 8:17). In ancient Rome, the act of adoption immediately granted the former slave his freedom, permanently placing him into the family of his master. So also, as the adopted children of God, we have been set free from slavery to sin. Moreover, we can rest assured in knowing that we have been given a permanent place in the family of God.

Adoption, in Roman times, signified a new beginning: entrance into a new family such that all previous ties and obligations were broken. The adoption process consisted of several specific legal procedures. The first step completely terminated the adopted child's social relationship and legal connection to his natural family. The second step made him a permanent member of his new family. . . .

Once the adoption was complete, the new son or daughter was then completely under both the care and control of the new father. The previous father no longer had any authority over his former child. In Roman households, the authority of the paterfamilias (“father of the family”) was final and absolute. And that authority extended to those adopted into the household, starting at the moment of their adoption. [2]

So it is with us, as the Lord looks upon lost and wicked “children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3), breaks the chains of our former master (sin—Romans 6:17), and removes us from the authority of our former father (the devil—John 8:44). All ties to our previous life are broken and we’re grafted into His eternal family and treated as if we had been there all along. From our heavenly Father’s perspective, no hint of our past life lingers, and none of the old animosity between us remains. We are His children, submitting to His authority and resting in His care.

As you might imagine, the benefits of such heavenly adoption are vast, as John MacArthur illustrates,

Because of our position in Christ, God now views us and treats us as He does His own Son—with infinite love. The Father cannot give anything but His best to His Son. Likewise, He will not give anything but His best to those of us who are in Christ—which is why we can “know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). [3]

Reflecting on the everlasting blessings and privileges of heavenly adoption, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote,

If God has adopted you into His family, if you are a child of God, your destiny is secure, it is certain. . . . It is a guarantee. If God has taken me into the family I am not only a child, I am an heir, and nothing, and no one can ever rob me of the inheritance. [4]

And it’s not just the Father who welcomes us into the heavenly household. The writer of Hebrews describes how our spiritual adoption also shapes our eternal relationship to Christ. “For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11).

#### Paul and Adoption

The apostle Paul would have been familiar with the method and meaning of adoption in Roman society, and he put the language of adoption to vivid use in his epistles. We’ll consider two poignant examples.

In his letter to the Galatians, he described how God’s spiritual adoption had set believers free from the rigid legalism of Judaism.

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7)

To the Romans, he emphasized how heavenly adoption sets us free from the slavery of sin and its eternal consequences.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out,

“Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:14-17)

In *Slave*, John MacArthur explains how those passages emphasize the importance and the value of our adoption into the family of God.

Though we were formerly enslaved to sin and the condemnation of the Law, we have been permanently liberated through our adoption into the family of God. As His adopted children, we enjoy the profound privilege of an intimate relationship with our heavenly Father, to whom we cry out with childlike affection, “Abba!”

A term of intimate endearment, Abba is an informal Aramaic term for “Father.” It expresses tenderness, dependence, and a childlike assurance that lacks any anxiety or fear. Jesus Himself used the term in the Garden of Gethsemane when He poured out His heart to His Father (Mark 14:36). That we would be allowed to address the Father in the same way Jesus did underscores the magnificent reality of our adoption. To be considered “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” is a remarkable truth, and one that we should never take for granted.

To think that we, who were once the slaves of sin, the subjects of Satan, and the sons of disobedience, are now and forever the slaves of Christ, the citizens of heaven, and the children of God—such is the joy and wonder of salvation. As His enemies, we did not even deserve to be His slaves. Yet, He has made us both His slaves and His children. The incomparable reality of adoption is this: If God is our Master, then He is also our Father. [5]

Footnotes:

[1]: *Slave*, 154-155

[2]: 155-157

[3]: 157-158

[4]: D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 189

[5]: *Slave*, 159-160