

# Romans 7:1–25

## **SESSION GOALS**

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** We can persevere in overcoming the still-sinful parts of us by remembering that the finished work of Jesus assures us of our ultimate victory over sin.

**Head Change:** To know that Christians still struggle with sin and our sin can be overcome.

**Heart Change:** To feel hopeful that God, through his gospel, will produce in us an ever-deepening love for him.

**Life Change:** To obey God by resisting sin because we love him and believe that, in Christ, ultimate victory over sin is certain.

## **OPEN**

**What traffic laws do you find most difficult to obey? Why?**

Laws and rules are put in place to help order our behavior, but often—like when we're behind the wheel of a car—we don't obey them. Sometimes rather than obeying the law, we obey our desires instead.

Our desires play a crucial role when it comes not just to obeying traffic laws, but to battling against sin as well. In this final session of *The Book of Romans: Part 1*, J.D. will dig into Romans 7 and explore the Christian's ongoing battle with sin.

## **READ**

Read Romans 7:1–25.

## **WATCH**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in J.D. Greear's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how J.D. answers the following questions.

**What classic work of literature does J.D. use to help illustrate Romans 7?**

**Why is the Christian life a battle we can't lose?**

**J.D. describes the Christian life as a coming to terms with what?**

Show Session 11: *Romans 7:1–25* (14 minutes).

## **DISCUSS**

J.D. opened this session by addressing what most of us know, but few of us willingly express: struggles with sin and temptation do not leave us when we become Christians. **When have you been frustrated with yourself about ongoing sin or the slowness of spiritual growth?**

J.D. suggested that Romans 7 can be a source of encouragement for us as we face temptation and wrestle with sin. Read Romans 7:1–6.

In these first few verses, Paul uses a marriage analogy to help his Jewish readers understand their relationship to the law. J.D. said, “Before we met Christ in the gospel, it’s like we were married to the law.” But because we are in Christ now, we aren’t tied to the law anymore and, therefore, our “marriage covenant” was voided. We now belong to Jesus. **What stands out to you about Paul’s analogy? In what ways do you find the analogy helpful?**

**Why is it good news that we belong to Jesus instead of the law?**

**According to Paul in verse 4, what does belonging to Christ lead to? How do we bear fruit—or live—for God? What evidence in your life points to your devotion to God?**

Paul says in verse 6 that since we’ve been released from the law—because we were “put to death through the body of Christ”—we can serve “in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.” Since we died with Christ and were raised with him, we now serve God as we might serve a spouse—in love, not out of obligation to a list of rules. **Are your acts of service fueled by love or obligation? How can we tell the difference between the two?**

Read Romans 7:7–13.

At this point in the letter, Jewish readers who learned and followed the law all their lives would likely wonder if Paul was against the law completely. Is the law good for anything? Paul anticipates and answers if the law is sin in verse 7. **How does Paul answer this question? What reason does he give for answering this way?**

**How does the law show us our sin?**

In verses 8 and 11, Paul uses the phrase “seizing an opportunity” to communicate sin’s active nature. Many of us can relate to that description, as it often feels like sin creeps up on us when we are most vulnerable. **Have you ever thought of sin as actively taking advantage of you? How can Paul’s description of sin help us plan to resist sin?**

*[Note: For further study on the active nature of sin, see **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this session.]*

Paul uses the tenth commandment, “do not covet,” as an example of sin’s sinister and opportunistic manipulation of the law. J.D. spent some time showing how covetousness—wanting what someone else has—is “the core sin behind all other sins.” **Where do you notice covetousness in your own heart? In what ways does sin use covetousness to lead you to disobey God?**

**Knowing the insidious nature of sin, what measures can you take to combat the still-sinful parts of you?**

Read Romans 7:14–25.

Verses 14–25 is a well-known passage of Scripture that describes the human condition in relatable terms. **To what extent do you relate to what Paul writes in this passage? What stands out to you most?**

*[Note: For further study on verses 14–25, see **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this session.]*

J.D. said that all believers have a constant war going on inside of them. We want to love and delight in God, but, with the same heart, we can also crave sin. **When has this internal war been most noticeable for you? What has it been like to fight against your sinful cravings?**

Using Tim Keller’s words, J.D. categorized our battle with sin as both “a battle we can’t win” and “the battle we can’t lose.” **Why is our battle against the law and sin a battle that, apart from Christ, we are unable to win? How did your life before Christ prove that you couldn’t win the battle?**

**Why is this battle, for us as Christians, one that we can’t lose?**

In verses 18–19, Paul groans that he has “no ability” to do the good that he wants to do but he’s fully capable of practicing the evil he doesn’t want to do. Sin comes much easier to us than righteousness. **When have you found it difficult, like Paul, to do the good that you wanted to do? Why do we find it so easy to sin, even if we don’t want to do it?**

The tension of this passage builds with each verse as Paul describes his plight. His condition (and ours) seems hopeless. **As you read, can you feel the constraint and frustration that Paul is trying to communicate? When have you experienced a similar frustration? How have you dealt with that frustration in the past?**

Near the end of this passage, it feels as if Paul is about to give up. But instead of imploding in frustration, he explodes into thanksgiving. **What truth eases Paul’s mind and fills him with joy? Why is it so important to remember that Jesus is the only one who can deliver us from our sinful condition?**

Paul’s expression of thanksgiving taps into the idea that J.D. returned to as he closed this session. He said that God is after the kind of obedience that grows from desire, or love. **In what ways does gratitude cultivate a deeper love for God? To what extent do feelings of gratitude lead you to the new kind of obedience that J.D. describes?**

**How can you be intentional about giving thanks to God for all he’s done for you?**

*[Note: For further study on the practice of cultivating gratitude, see **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this session.]*

The book of Romans is a dense, deeply theological book that covers a lot of ground. We’ve only studied the first half of Paul’s letter, but we have a lot to reflect on. **What’s one thing you want to remember from this study of the first half of Romans? What could you do this week to apply that truth to your life?**

**LAST WORD**

The book of Romans gives us an in-depth look at the gospel and its power to save, redeem, justify, and sanctify us. On top of that, the gospel empowers us to resist the sin that continues to pester us even after we become Christians. It is only by the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord that we gain victory over the penalty, power, and, one day, the presence of sin.

As we close this series, consider the truths we explored while studying the book of Romans. Consider reading these first seven chapters again slowly this week and reflecting on what God has taught you. Pray that he would embed these lessons in your heart so that you can walk in the knowledge that your battle against sin is a battle you can't lose.

**Note:** *This series is split into two parts. Look for The Book of Romans, Part 2 (January 2023) in the RightNow Media library.*

### **GO DEEPER**

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider reading one section a day to deepen your study of the book of Romans.

#### *1. The Active Nature of Sin*

It's common to view sin as a behavior we merely choose to do. But sin is not just an act or behavior that we engage in, it is an active force that seeks to exert its will upon us.

Read Romans 7:8–13.

We don't often talk about sin the way Paul does in this passage. We tend to speak about sin as if it's something we "fall into," or we may not talk about sin at all. **What stands out to you about the way Paul describes sin? In what ways is his description of sin different from how we often think about sin today?**

As Paul describes it, sin is not something we merely fall into. It is an active force that seeks to destroy us. **If sin actively seeks to destroy us, how should we view temptation? To what lengths should we go to resist temptation and overcome the still-sinful parts of us?**

**What practical measures can you take to keep yourself from temptation?**

We learned in Romans 6 that sin leads to death while faith in Christ leads to eternal life. **When faced with temptation, how could you remind yourself that sin is actively trying to lead you to death while faith in Christ leads to eternal life?**

One of the critical weapons we have against the influence of sin is Christian community. **Whom could you enlist to help keep you from giving into sin and temptation?**

When sin seeks to seize an opportunity to deceive you, remember that no matter how enticing it may seem, its end is death. Ask God to give you the grace to remember Paul's words in

Romans 6:23: “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

## 2. *The Christian or Non-Christian Experience?*

Life as a Christian isn't easy. There is a constant tension bubbling within us between doing what is good and doing what is evil, to use Paul's phrasing. But is the Christian life what he's describing in this passage?

Read Romans 7:14–25.

Many people debate whether Paul, in this passage, is referring to his experience as a Christian or his experience before being saved by God. **How have you heard this passage taught?**

J.D. shared that he views this passage as Paul's commentary on the struggle with sin that we experience as Christians. **Do you agree with J.D.'s interpretation? Why or why not?**

**When you read this passage, does it seem like Paul is referring to his experience as a Christian or before he became a Christian? Why?**

Throughout the passage, Paul refers to the struggle between doing good and evil—how he's incapable of doing the good he wants to do but finds himself often practicing the evil he doesn't want to do. **When you think of your life as a Christian, to what extent is Paul describing your current experience?**

**How does your experience as a Christian differ from your life before Christ? Before you were saved, to what extent did you struggle in the way Paul describes?**

Though people arrive at different conclusions, it's important to know that both views of this passage are considered permissible. In either view, the passage culminates in the only appropriate way: with thanks being ascribed to Jesus. **Why is Jesus our only hope for being “rescued from this body of death”?**

Think about your experiences with sin and grace. Jesus has rescued us from the law of sin and death. Ask God to use this passage to help you cultivate thanksgiving for being rescued by Jesus.

## 3. *Cultivating Gratitude*

After walking his readers through his back-and-forth battle with sin, Paul ends Romans 7 with an exclamation of gratitude.

Read Romans 7:24–25.

Paul ends by thanking God for the gift of his Son—the one who provides rescue from the power and penalty of sin. **What question precedes Paul's exclamation of thanks? Why do we need rescue?**

Paul spends at least ten verses describing his struggle with sin and his desire to obey God. He seems hopeless against his sin, unable to overcome it. **In what ways can you relate to Paul?**

While we wouldn't want to dwell on our sin too long, remembering our sinfulness—and what Jesus has done in response to it—can be a productive way to spur ourselves toward gratitude. **In what ways can you practice the remembrance of God's love as a spiritual discipline? What could it look like practically in your everyday life?**

Set aside a few minutes to remember your life before Christ. **What did he rescue you from? Where did your former way of life lead? How is the eternal life with Christ you now experience better? Where does your new life in Christ ultimately lead?**

Even though we're at the end of *The Book of Romans: Part 1*, God is not done teaching you through his Word. Consider how you can continue using this book, and practices like remembering your former life, to grow in your knowledge of him and gratitude for what he's done for you through Christ. Take a few minutes to thank God for what he's taught you through Romans and ask that he continue to mature you.