
The Pull of the Flesh & The Power of the Spirit

Romans 7:7-8:17

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Introduction

Author:

- the apostle Paul

Audience:

- the church in Rome, predominately Gentile but including a minority of Jews

Date:

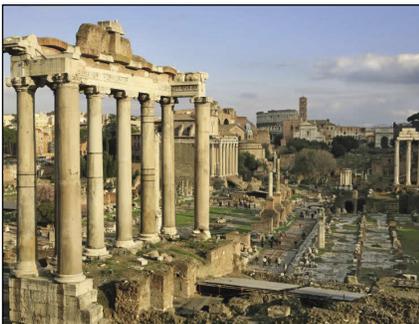
- about AD 57

Theme:

- Paul writes to the church in Rome to present his basic statement of the gospel; God's plan of salvation for all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike.

Characteristics:

- The most systematic of Paul's letters. It reads more like an elaborate theological essay than a letter.
- Emphasis on Christian doctrine. The number and importance of the theological themes touched upon are impressive: sin and death, salvation, grace, faith, righteousness, justification, sanctification, redemption, resurrection and glorification.
- Widespread use of OT quotations, although Paul regularly quotes from the OT in his letters, in Romans the argument is sometimes carried along by such quotations (especially chapters 9-11).



Romans 7:7-25 - The Law & Sin

For centuries, people have debated whether Romans 7 is a picture of Paul as a non-Christian *before* his conversion, or a portrait of his experience as a Christian *after* his conversion.

“**Flesh**” (*grk: sarx*): here Paul often uses this term not to just indicate a physical body, but to describe people or things that share the corruptibility and morality of the world and it’s rebellion toward God (c.f **Rom 7:5, 18, 25; 8:3-9, 12-13**).

“**Spirit**” (*grk: pneuma*): this term usually refers to God’s Spirit (the Holy Spirit), but sometimes it could refer to the human spirit; the inner reality of someone’s life (c.f **Rom 7:6; 8:2, 4-6, 9-11, 13-16, 23, 26, 27**).

Romans 7:7-14

Don’t think about a pink elephant. What do you immediately think about?

- This is what Paul says the Law does to us - it shows and makes us aware of our sin and **guilt** before God (v. 7)!
- Paul is correcting the false argument that God’s law is bad and evil because it makes us guilty - but God’s law is good (v. 12) and doesn’t make us sin, it simply makes us aware and **reveals** our guilt.
- This is done for a purpose by God - that we might understand how **utterly sinful** we are (v. 13) and stir humility in us.

Romans 7:14-25

Have you ever struggled with committing some sin that you didn’t want to do, but you did it anyway?

- To me this has been my experience as a Christian. I have found that there are times that I do things that I know are wrong, but I chose to do them anyway.
- Paul says it is no longer him who does them, but it is sin living in him, that is his “flesh” - or sinful nature (v. 17-20).
- Paul says that evil is “right there with him” (v. 21 - c.f. **Gal 5:13-25**).

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- Paul recognizes his sin as utterly sinful (v. 13) and calls himself a “wretched man” (v. 24 - c.f. **1 Tim 1:15**).
 - It is **ONLY Jesus Christ** who can save us from this body of death that we are held in currently (c.f. **2 Cor 4:7-5:10; Rom 8:23**), not any legalistic effort we make.

Romans 8:1-17 - Life Through the Spirit

Continuing the line of thinking from Romans 7, Paul now turns his attention to expounding on the answer (v. 25) to his question (v. 24).

Romans 8:1-8

What does it mean to be in Christ?

- There is now **NO CONDEMNATION** for those in Christ Jesus! (c.f. **2 Tim 2:1**)
 - We must have faith in him, die with him, and be clothed with him (c.f. **Rom 6:3-7; Gal 3:26-27**).
- God’s righteous requirements, because of Jesus and not our own righteous deeds (v. 2), are **FULLY** met in **US** (v. 4)!

What does it mean to live according to the Spirit? According to the flesh?

- Life by the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like (c.f. **Gal 5:19-21**).
- Life by the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (c.f. **Gal 5:22-23**).

What does it mean to have your mind “governed”?

- Paul says that our life according to the spirit, or according to the flesh, revolves around what our *minds* are set on (v. 5-7) (c.f. **Phl 4:8; Mat 22:37**).
 - Today many of us are far too comfortable not disciplining and training our *minds*. Entertainment abounds through television, internet, social media, etc. and most

of us are not serious in any way about meditation, scripture memory, reading, study, or anything that really challenges, engages, and stretches our *minds* to the glory of God!

- Practical challenge: memorize at least one bible verse every week for the next year.
- Paul says that those who live in the realm of the flesh *cannot* please God! (v. 8)
 - If you find yourself continually stuck in the patterns of Romans 7:14-25 perhaps it is because your mind is *governed* by the flesh (c.f. **Gal 5:19-21**).

Romans 8:9-17

What does it mean to be “indebted” to the Spirit?

- Our mortal bodies are subject to death because of sin (v. 10), yet we will be given a new spiritual body through the Spirit (v. 10-11).
 - This means that we will be given a “resurrection body”, we will not be completely disembodied (c.f. **2 Cor 5:1-5**).
 - If God is going to give us an imperishable, immortal body in heaven, how do you think he wants us to take care of our earthly tents now? (c.f. **Lk 12:47-48; Mat 25:14-30**)
- Our obligation (grk: *opheiletēs* - literally a ‘debtor’) is to the Spirit, not our flesh (v. 12). We owe our flesh *nothing!* (c.f. **1 Cor 6:19-20**)
- Our receiving of the Spirit of God frees us from the slavery of fear (v. 15 c.f. **Heb 2:15**) and gives us confidence of our adoption by God as his children (c.f. **2 Tim 2:1**).
 - God’s Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are indeed God’s children (v. 16), *if* we share in his sufferings (v. 17)!
 - In what ways do you suffer for Christ?