

ROMANS 7

The Foundational Faith

Ibn Adam Al-Amin

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ROMANS 7

In the New Testament in Romans 7 Paul the apostle says “***The good that I want to do I do not do, but the evil which I do not want to do I do it.***” (Romans 7:19). In reading the text two opinions become clear. One says that Paul is under the control of sin even though he is a believer in Christ. The other says that Paul is describing his life as if he lives under the Law of Moses. Let us study the book to understand more and to know the truth.

A SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS OF ROMANS

The book of Romans has been written by an author whose background is life under the Law of Moses but he is now a believer in Christ. It was written to believers whose background and traditions are under the Law of Moses and in a number of places in the book of Romans Paul confronts the failings of the Law of Moses with examples and verses. But this book is also for believers who are not under the Law of Moses because this good news is appropriate for all.

Paul’s purpose in the book is to present and proclaim the news of Christ to the people according to their background of the Law of Moses from a number of different directions, Christ’s death came to confirm that we are sinners and not able to follow the law for this reason we all need a redeemer who will save us from this burden.

So, Paul gives his understanding and his opinion about Christ and it was inspired from God. We have failed to keep the points of the law. Therefore, we deserve punishment according to the law and that punishment is death. But God has solved the problem by Jesus Christ, son of the virgin Mary who carried the punishment and was victorious over sin by His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

The children of Abraham carry the Law of Moses and were proud of it. God promised Abraham by prophecy that he would bless the world through his descendants and He completed the promise through Christ Himself who completed the law. We join Him in pleasing God by faith in Him for salvation because he paid the debt of death for our sins and he died on the cross and rose from the dead for our salvation and rescued us from Hell.

The people who were under the Law of Moses were proud because they are descendants of Abraham and obey the law. They think they please God by their obedience and that they are more holy than all others. Therefore, Paul writes to them, who are under the law, in a way to convince them. Those under the law are not acceptable to God because they are under the control of sin.

Chapters 1-3:

How does Paul convince them? Paul first establishes that those who do not have the law are not

acceptable to God. And in Romans 2:1, he testifies of the truth that even the people who live under the law, they are not acceptable to God, as is written in Romans 3 ***“Because all sinned and do not reach up to what glorifies God.”*** (Romans 3:23)

Then at the end of Chapter 3, Paul explains that Christ is the mediator.

From chapter 4 through 7 Paul compares the law with Christ with examples and detail.

Chapter 4:

It is written that Abraham was righteous according to his faith as he believed God’s words even though he did not see but saw the opposite. God said to him that he would be a father of many. But he had no son. And we also have faith in God’s words even though we do not see evidence.

Chapter 5:

Paul presents the Gospel (the righteous and good news) that salvation comes through Christ. And he clarifies that the reason Adam was condemned to die was because of his sin. And all of us are guilty and sinners and deserve death. For this we need an intercessor.

And remember Paul is talking to people who are under the Law of Moses and they are arrogant of their obedience and proud of themselves and think that their works will save them. So, he clarifies the greatness of our sin in chapter 5 that God gave us the law to show us how sinful we are.

Chapter 6:

We died and rose with Christ. The power of sin does not control the believers and there is no reason to justify sin. We receive our death by faith and thereby live a life that pleases God.

Chapter 7:

This chapter begins with an example of marriage, saying the married woman is bound to her husband but when her husband dies she is free to marry another according to the law. The woman represents the believer, the first husband represents the believer’s body of flesh, the new husband represents Christ. When we have died in the flesh by faith we have been freed according to the law to marry Christ, who is faultless and good.

We are not able by the law to be changed to be righteous and innocent. Paul testifies of his failure to control his self through the old way of law ***“The good I want to do I do not do, but the evil I do not want to do I do it.”*** (Romans 7:19). But Paul has written the solution to the failure in verse 25 and the solution is Christ.

Chapter 8:

Paul explains more about the life of faith, the new life of our participation with Christ’s death and resurrection.

Chapters 9-11:

Paul talks to the people who are under the Law of Moses and encourages them in their membership with Christ.

Chapters 12-16:

In the last four chapters Paul talks about works that match faith in Christ and greetings to some of the believes who are in Rome.

This is the end of the summary of the points of the book Romans. Now let us look at what is in chapter 7. We begin with the important points of chapter 6. Let us review together what is in it.

ROMANS CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6 establishes our death and resurrection in Christ. ***“We know that our old man which was in us has been crucified with Christ, so that we stop committing sin in our being so we are no longer slaves to sin.”*** (Romans 6:6) We are not slaves to sin, and there is no excuse that excuses us to commit it. The crucifixion of Christ has thrown away our bodies (our ‘old man’) and solidified us to live in His Spirit. He has sentenced our bodies before we were born and has rescued our bodies 2,000 years ago. We were not there and we had nothing to do with it. As for us, we receive His sacrifice and its results by faith. The sinful body has gone away and this struggle has ended and The Conqueror conquered the sinful body and He is the all-knowing One who listens. We believe in Him and trust Him. ***“It is necessary that you consider your bodies as dead in regards to sin, but alive in the way of God because you have been joined to Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 6:11)

We have been crucified with Christ, died, buried and resurrected with Him. Adam’s sin resulted in his body being subject to the punishment of death. Likewise we are under the penalty of death because of our sin according to the just law of God. But we do not fear death because Christ has paid the price of death, death which we deserved because of our faults and sins. He was made like us, in this flesh, so that He could carry this penalty legally.

So, what part of Christ died? His spirit? His mind? His feelings? The answer is His body died, He bled and died and was buried and rose with a new body, an immortal and incorruptible body.

The way God punishes sin is to execute the flesh. We believe that we are dead and while on this earth we live by faith in our death and resurrection with Christ. We do not see our bodies as dead but we receive the truth and believe by faith. Like Abraham, God promised him that he would become a father of a great people but he had no son and he and his wife were too old. But Abraham trusted him and believed Him and God considered him righteous for his faith.

We are dead and the sinful body has gone and there is no justification to sin, because we live and abide in Christ.

And now let us look at what is found in chapter 7.

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

“Dear brothers, you know the law, therefore without a doubt you will understand my words. The law applies to a person only as long as he lives.” (Romans 7:1)

The nature of law is that it rules over the living. For example, the tax department does not take its taxes from the dead. A beautiful girl does not tempt the dead. And according to chapter 6 we are dead and we believe and trust this by faith.

“As an example, the married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband died, she is no longer held by the marriage contract.” (Romans 7:2)

When her body dies she is free to marry, according to the law.

“But if she were to go to another man while her husband lives, then she would be an adulterous. But if her husband died then she becomes free according to the law, so that if she married another man she would not be an adulterous.” (Romans 7:3)

Jesus said ***“Do not think that I have come to cancel the law or books of the prophets, I have come not to cancel them but to complete them.”*** (Matthew 5:17) The law is good and binds the woman to her first husband. But when the first husband (i.e. her body) died, then she is free to marry a second time. According to the law, she marries a new husband. She represents the believer. And her new husband represents Christ.

So, who does the first husband represent? Why did she leave him? The first husband is the body which is under the control of sin and the penalty of death because of the sin, Adam’s sin and our sin.

So, Paul is saying “Our bodies have died and risen anew. And because we are dead we are free to marry Christ, meaning to join Him, according to the law.”

“And it is the same with you, my brothers, you, as members of the body of Christ, have died...” (Romans 7:4)

In the marriage illustration, the woman is free to remarry because the first husband died. This first husband is the body of flesh.

“...according to the law in order to be joined to the other, in other words to the one that rose from the dead to life, so we do useful works for God.” (Romans 7:4)

The focal point of the passage is you. You are free according to the law because your body has died with Christ by faith and the law does not hold and punish the dead. So, you marry and join Christ.

It is not necessary to mention the rest of the illustration, because Paul has already made clear the foundation of our death and resurrection with Christ. ***“...we have died with Him and been buried with Him. Therefore, as Christ rose from the dead by the power of the Father and His majesty, we also live a new life. So, if we have been united with Him in death, in other words we died as He died, then we assuredly join with Him in the resurrection, in other words we raise as he rose. We know that our old man which was in us has been crucified with Christ, so that we stop committing sin in our being so we are no longer slaves to sin. For he who died has been freed from sin.”*** (Romans 6:4-7)

So, from this chapter we know that we are no longer married to our flesh, but married to Christ, and this by faith.

“For when we were in the flesh,...” (Romans 7:5)

This is like the women married to the first husband.

“...the lust of sin which are aroused by the law, they work in all our being so that we do deeds

that lead to death.” (Romans 7:5)

The body is made of members and these members are like the eye and tongue and hands, etc. These members cause us to fall into earthly problems and headstrong lusts. And the law makes it clear and confirms that our path leads to death if we do not have an intercessor.

“But now we have been set free from the law, because we died in relation to the thing that held us in bondage...” (Romans 7:6)

It mentions that the thing that dies and binds us, it is the first husband. And the first husband, he is our body. And when our bodies died by faith with the body of Christ on the cross, we became free to marry Christ because we died and rose with Christ by faith.

The law is still good and working, but we have been freed from it by the death of our bodies by faith.

“...so we serve God in a new way by the Spirit and not by the old way according to the written command.” (Romans 7:6)

So, we have a choice to either live in the flesh (i.e. the old husband) which is under the law or live in the Spirit (the new husband). We were frustrated and held in bondage to the old man but Christ freed us by His death. God said that our bodies have died with Christ and rose with Him.

It is not you who live but Christ who lives in you. Believe in Him and He lives in you by His new life.

“So, then what can we say? Is it possible that the law itself is sin? God forbid! But the law, it is what made me know what sin is. So, for example, if the law did not say ‘Do not lust’ I would not have known what lusting was.” (Romans 7:7)

You might think from what has been written in Romans that the law is bad. So, Paul answers this by saying that our bodies fail and it is not the law that fails. Because our bodies are enslaved to sin and the law makes that clear.

“But sin found an opportunity to use this command, and effected in me all kinds of lusts. Because sin is without power except where there is law. For before I knew the law I was alive...” (Romans 7:8-9)

Paul is saying that when he was the age of a child he did not know the law and did not know he was guilty. And most of the parents know the behavior of the child and even though they are born innocent they know the child’s sin when they refuse the parents words.

“...but when the commandment came to me, sin began to live, and I died. So, the commandment, which purposed to make me live, it itself made me die.” (Romans 7:9-10)

Paul, as if he were living under the law like a non-believer in Christ, testifies personally of the effect of the law on himself and the effect of the law on his failure. And the result of failure according to the law is death. His guilt and sin make him fail in front of the law. Therefore, he deserves punishment and it is necessary that he die.

The law did not fail. It is possible to please God if you did not sin even once ever and by this you have followed the law. Those who live under the law are proud of it. But there is not one that lives according to the law and obeys it completely, except one and He is Christ. The law does not bring life, but brings death because it confirms our failure, “***because all have sinned and fall short of what glorifies God.***” (Romans 3:23)

So, Paul testifies personally of sin and that his life is a failure according to the law in the following verses 11 through 13:

“For sin used the command as an opportunity, and deceived me and killed me. So, the law is righteous, and the command also is righteous, just and good. So, did the things that were meant to be good, cause for me death? God forbid! But sin, in order to show that it is sin, used what is good to kill me. And by that, therefore, by way of the command, the sin proved its exceeding evilness.” (Romans 7:11-13)

Paul is saying, ‘*It is clear to me that I am unable to abide in and obey the law; I deserve death because of my sins and faults and not abiding to the law. Though the law is holy and good it just points out my failures. I hope that you understand from me that you are like me in that you are unable to obey the law even if you put much effort to.*’

“We know that the law is spiritual, but as for me, there is flesh inside of me, sold as a slave to sin.” (Romans 7:14)

Paul is speaking about himself and this is the condition of all of us. And he continues in his testimony about the failure of the righteous life under the law.

“I do not understand my behavior, for I do not do what I want, but what I hate.” (Romans 7:15)

For example, in other words, ‘*I desire to do right but I am unable. I did not want to consume drugs but I consumed them. My mother taught me well to be good and my training was intense and repeated but I am not able.*’

“For if I do what I do not want, then I, by that, agree with the law that the law is good.” (Romans 7:16)

There were people that were under the law that accused Paul of forgetting the law and not being concerned with it. But Paul testifies with this verse of his acceptance of the law, that it is good.

“But in actuality it is not me that does that work, but sin that dwells in me. I know that there is nothing in me that is good, I mean in my flesh, because I want to do good but I am unable to do it.” (Romans 7:17-18)

Paul’s will and strength were good for work. Everyone wants to do the good. But there is something that holds them from doing good. What holds us? Paul says it is the flesh!

The flesh is stronger than Paul’s will and strength. The flesh controls him. For example, the earth’s gravity is like the body and it needs a strength greater than it in order to fly. But how do we fly? We need a strength that overcomes gravity in order to control the body.

Likewise, in order for us not to sin, we need something to control our flesh. The control must be greater than the flesh. Paul testifies that his power of will and strength of body could not overcome the corrupt flesh. So, what can? Only something greater, and that is Christ's pure sacrifice and His resurrection from the dead. And by this He has established His strength as stronger than the body.

Paul continues by describing his lost life and describes his situation where there is no strength which helps him to control his flesh.

“For the good which I want to do I do not do, but the evil which I do not want to do I do that. Then if I am not doing what I want to do, then the sin lives in me, it is what does it not me. For this is the principle I found: when I want to do good, I find that which I can do, it is evil.”
(Romans 7:19-21)

Where does ‘sin live in me’? It lives in my fleshly body.

“Therefore in my inner self,…” (Romans 7:22)

In the inside of a person there are things that are not tangible, for example the will, feelings, senses, etc. And there are tangible things like members of the body, for example the eyes, the ears, the hands, etc. And all of us have all these things.

“...I rejoice in the law of God.” (Romans 7:22)

Paul is talking as if he were living under the Law of Moses so he is happy in the law and obeys it and does it.

“...but I find in my members another strength that wars against the principles that my mind accepts, that makes me captive to the strength of sin present in my members.” (Romans 7:23)

Where is this sin? Where is this fault? It is not the will or intent. The will wants to do the right thing. So Paul is saying, ‘*I am not doing evil by my will or emotions but there is something that leads me to do evil. And this thing is with me.*’ Then, what is this thing? It is the flesh.

“O what a wretch! Who shall deliver me from the flesh whose fate is death?” (Romans 7:24)

But who rescues me from this flesh? Paul answers this question with his personal testimony and his words testify about the impossibility of following the Law of Moses and to end his testimony he says the answer and solution. And he says the solution is Christ.

“Thank God, Jesus Christ our Lord, He is my Savior. Then in summary, I, according to my own thought, am submitted to God’s law, but according to my flesh submitted to the power of sin.” (Romans 7:25)

Notice that the last time God was mentioned was in 7:4 and the Spirit was mentioned in 7:6. Paul's whole discussion was pointing to his failure to obey the law. Paul's desire in this discussion was to speak as one who tries to obey the Law of Moses but is unable to because the flesh prevents it. And Paul's words point to his testimony of failure of his obedience. He was speaking as a non-believer in Christ, before he believes in Him. ***“Those who are under the***

control of the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:8)

ROMANS CHAPTER 8

So, Paul gives a summary and explains more. He explains our great hope of salvation on earth and continuing on to eternal life.

“Therefore whoever is in Christ Jesus, God does not condemn them.” (Romans 8:1)

This verse summarizes what is found in chapter 5.

“But the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2)

We live eternally and are freed from sin and this is a summary of chapter 6.

“For the law could not do it because the bodily flesh made it weak. But God did what the law could not do by sending His Son in bodily flesh looking like our bodily sinful flesh, to be a sacrifice as payment for the sins, and to condemn sin in the bodily flesh.” (Romans 8:3)

The subject is the weakness of the flesh and this is a summary of chapter 7.

“And by that what has been requested by the righteous law has been completed in us, we who live according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.” (Romans 8:4)

The Good News, frees us and cleanses us from sin. But the law was not able to cleanse us from sin. And this is the summary of chapter 8.

So, our hope is great in Christ as is written:

“But you, if the Spirit of God lives in you, you are not under the control of bodily flesh, but under the control of the Spirit. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, then they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then, even though your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirit lives because God considers you righteous.” (Romans 8:9-10)

CONFIRMATION THAT PAUL IS TALKING AS A NON-BELIEVER

This is what appears about Paul in regards to his words as if he were not a believer:

1. Paul says that he is dead in Christ by faith and he says that we, all of us, are free to live a righteous life by faith.

“...We have died to sin so how can we live in it any longer?” (Romans 6:2)

“We know that our old man, which was in us, has been crucified with Christ, so that sin would stop in our members so that we no longer are slaves to sin. Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.” (Romans 6:6-7)

“For this reason, sin has no control over you, because you are not serving the law but the grace of God.” (Romans 6:14)

“Now you have been freed from sin, and become slaves of righteousness.”
(Romans 6:18)

“As far as now, you have been freed from sin and become slaves of God. The result is a righteous life, then eternal life.” (Romans 6:22)

2. Paul presents his argument to people who are under the Law of Moses. Dear Reader, notice that the Paul’s way of arguing as he presents the text in the first chapter from verses 18-32 where he confirms something well known to them as if agreeing with them. Then in 2:1 he surprises them with something new, something not known. This is a type of argument. Paul uses this same way in chapter 7. From 7:14-24 he presents a text and those under the law agree with it. And in 7:25 he surprises them with the news of Christ. In chapter 1 and in chapter 7 Paul is speaking to them in a certain way to convince them.

In 7:14-24 Paul is speaking to them and presents himself as if he were one of them. He personally expresses his trial in the law and shares with them their thoughts and beliefs to the point that he joins them in order to convince them. He confirms to them that his trial with the law failed and surprises them with the solution in 7:25.

The condition of those who live under the law is failure because not one of us is able to please God completely. But our condition is success with Christ, who completed the law and sacrificed His righteous life for us. He is acceptable and we are acceptable in Him to the Holy God.

What is life like under the law? Failure.

What is life like under Christ? Victory.

3. Notice, Dear Reader, that Paul does not say in 7:22 that he wants to follow Christ. But he says his desire is to follow the law. He presented himself as if he lives under the law and not as a believer in Christ.
4. Christ is not mentioned until the end of the subject. The focus of the text is on the law and not on Christ. In the text Paul presents himself as obedient to the law and not obedient to Christ.

So, in the end, we either live as believers, in faith free from sin (as described in Romans 6 and 8), or we live as non-believers and remain slaves to the flesh (as described in Romans 7) which in the end will be death in Hell.

CHRIST HAS COMPLETED IT

If someone of us were to understand that there are two natures that fight inside of us, like a bad nature and the second good, or like an old nature and the other new and the two natures fight together as if it holds the believer and makes him sin on purpose as if Christ did not complete the killing of sin, then there are four differences against this opinion:

1. If Christ did not complete it, then we need a second savior that saves us from the sins while we are on earth.
2. If Christ did not complete it, then Paul has utterly failed to prove to those that live under the Law of Moses that Christ is the truth and the solution. If we misunderstand, then Paul is saying that the believers are hypocrites and are not able to do what they intend. If we misunderstand, Paul is saying the Gospel is not righteous and not effective on earth.
3. If we misunderstand then Paul is saying, *'Listen, I am God's apostle, but I say to you that I do not do right. God called me to preach the Good News and I tell you that I do not do right. Every morning I get up with intentions to do the right things, but I cannot. The flesh controls me and makes me sin. My intentions and my purpose and in my mind, I am serving God, but I hide my real self and sin in my body many times. I am a slave to my body. Don't tell anybody, that I cannot do the right thing.'* If we misunderstood then this is not Good News.
4. If we misunderstand then the promise of Christ is mistaken in that He gave us a heavy yoke for us to carry and not an light one.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Why is it important if we understand that Christ has made it possible for us to live a righteous life?

- A. The Good News of chapter 8 would not be good news if 7:14-24 means that Christ was not able to control the flesh. But in actuality chapter 7 clarifies our state without Christ and we rejoice in our true situation according to the Good News in chapter 8.
- B. Christ has won the war over the flesh and the effort of the war is not on us. So, we serve the Lord and are not concerned with our selves. We are free to face evil in the world and preach the Good News.
- C. We can teach others so they will not tire from something that has been completed.
- D. Many around us live under the law. Chapter 7 is especially for those who live under the law and it clarifies for them how they fail under the law. And the solution is especially for them and it is faith in Christ who has completed the law completely.

For this reason, share the Good News clearly and boldly and encourage those next to you. The Lord is alive in you.

Amen.