

**To whom is Romans 7 referring?**

- *Autobiographical*
- *Not a Christian at his/her best*
- *Not a normal unregenerate person*
- *Not a Christian at his/her worst*

**The Answer**

- *An unusual unconverted person trying to keep God's law*
- *Release from the law is death*
- *Godly living comes by a relationship with Jesus*
- *Faith*
- *The Holy Spirit makes plain God's ways*

Let us draw some conclusions from Romans 7:7–12 and 7:13–25. It is surely about a real struggle that a modern person is likely to face.

'Clever' interpretations are not convincing. It is not about Israel or Adam or some kind of corporate 'Mr Everyman'. It is surely something Paul knew about very personally. I take it that some kind of autobiographical interpretation is correct.

It cannot be the Christian at his or her best. The Christian who is what he or she ought to be is not miserable, not defeated, and not asking 'who' can save him.

It cannot be the normal unregenerate person. The normal non-Christian does not have this kind of insight, does not know the spirituality of the law, is not delighting in the Mosaic law.

Is it the Christian who is for some reason a defective Christian? One without the baptism with the Holy Spirit? One who is trusting himself? I am not convinced! It does not exactly fit the flow of thought in Romans. And the Christian even at his worst does not ask, 'Who shall deliver me . . . ?' Despite what some say, this question must be taken seriously.

What then is the answer? I reply in this way. The context is about the law of God and its weakness (despite its basic goodness). Paul has already said in verse 5: 'When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.' Romans 7:7–25 is surely an extended exposition and development of verse 5. It is about an unconverted person (someone 'in the flesh') trying to keep the most spiritual commandment in the law. Admittedly it is an unusual unconverted person because most unconverted people do not bother about God's law at all!

When Paul gave his burst of praise to God, it was because he knew something entirely different from the agony he had been describing. He was thanking God for knowing his release from the law of God. Amazingly, we have to die to the holy and righteous and good law of God. The law will not help us. We shall bring forth fruit unto death if we live under it. Of course we do not die to holiness, but we die to a particular way of trying to get to that holy life. To walk in the Spirit actually fulfils and more-than-fulfils the law of Israel. Jesus' level of spirituality is higher than the Mosaic law.

Godly living comes by a relationship with Jesus that is direct. Sanctification comes by faith in Jesus plus faith in Jesus plus more faith in Jesus. Godliness consists of the works of faith, not the works of the law. Try it! It works! Fellowship with Jesus is the secret of holy living. Holiness is living for God. It is love for people. It is being like Jesus. Holiness is without the law – although indirectly it does 'fulfil the law'. Forget about the law of God for the moment. Realize that Jesus is your Saviour. Realize that you are holy in him. See that he has taken you out of the kingdom of sin altogether. Then start resisting sin. The Holy Spirit will make plain to you what are the works of the flesh. You do not need the law of

- *We know these things – the Spirit makes them obvious*



to you what are the works of the flesh. You do not need the law of God to know that to worship some pagan god is sin (the first commandment), or that to worship God under the form of some painting or statue is sin (the second commandment), or that to use the name of God to your own advantage is sin (the third commandment). You will know those things without having to consult the ten commandments. Yes, of course the ten commandments describe them as sin, but did you have to look them up to know? The works of the flesh are plain to everyone who has been born again by the Spirit of God. You know that you ought to respect your parents (the fifth commandment). You would feel bad if you killed anyone (the sixth commandment) or if you committed adultery (the seventh commandment) or stole (the eighth commandment) or lied (the ninth commandment). You do not need the external commandments to know these things are sin. The works of the flesh are obvious!

### Growing in Godliness in the Spirit

- *Hear God's voice by meditating on His written word*
- *Focus on love*
- *Deal with temptation*
- *Accept God's chastening*
- *Grow in newness of life in the Spirit*

Jesus speaks his word to you by his Spirit. Get to hear the voice of God by meditating on God's written Word. As you read the Mosaic legislation, do not put yourself under it. When you read about murder, Jesus will talk to you about anger. When you read about adultery, Jesus will talk to you about purity. You will be going beyond the law. The one thing to focus on is love, seeing things from the other person's point of view<sup>1</sup>, being like Jesus to others, making others feel forgiven, wanted, valued, encouraged. Cultivate skill in recognizing temptation and cutting it off at its earliest stages. Expect God to give you extra help by chastening you! Accept his rebukes. Painful events are there to teach you. Let patience have its perfect work. Resist the devil. Attend to the detailed instructions of Jesus. Grow in wisdom. Grow in skill at working out how to live. Learn your weaknesses. When you fail, get up again. Receive the forgiveness of God. Go forward in prayer and more prayer and more prayer. Learn to give quantity time and quality time to God. Regard yourself as at best an unprofitable servant. Belong to Jesus ' . . . who has been raised from the dead so that we may bear fruit for God'. Be happy slaves 'in the new life of the Spirit'. 'Who will deliver me?' Jesus already has!

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:12

	<p><b>Dr Michael Eaton</b> is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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