

**Grace Pastors' Fellowship**

**Toward an Understanding of Romans 7:13-25  
and  
The Wretched Man**

**Presented by Pastor Stephen Kring, Bethesda Baptist Church, Delhi, Ontario  
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“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tm. 3:16, 17). Romans 7 is included. Therefore we are clearly justified in devoting the next hour or so in this meeting to seeking to understand this chapter in God’s inspired Word.

However, we all need to approach our study of Romans 7 in a spirit of humility. We need to acknowledge that greater men than we are have come to this passage and reached conclusions that differ from our own interpretations, whatever they might be. Men of greater intellect, of superior giftedness, of deeper holiness and of wider usefulness in God’s kingdom have had a different understanding of our text than we do. It would be ideal if all those we look up to all agreed. But who wants to choose between Don Carson and John Reisinger, between Doug Moo and C.H. Spurgeon, between Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Piper, between David Morris and Robert Haldane?

Neither is it as simple as saying, “We just need to come to the text prayerfully, ready to be led by the Spirit, seeking to understand the context and the grammatical, historical information available to us, and surely we will come away with the correct interpretation of Romans 7.” That is exactly what all faithful expositors of God’s Word would seek to do! And yet they still differ. Poor Paul. Sinclair Ferguson can almost imagine him crying out in heaven, “O wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of commentators?”

I propose, then, the following approach. We will start with a brief description of the main interpretations of Romans 7 and the “wretched man”. Then, we will consider which of these best fits the context. Next, we will seek to discover which position is left with the least number of difficulties to seek to explain, or has the strongest explanation of those difficulties. Finally, we will look at the practical implications of our interpretation.

## **I. The Main Interpretations**

The majority of interpreters are in agreement when it comes to understanding the illustration of marriage and the change of husbands in Romans 7:1-6. In Christ, believers have died to their old husband, the law, and now belong to another, to the risen Christ who supplies them with the Holy Spirit so that they can bear fruit for God.

There is also general agreement that vss. 7-12 depict a person(s) in their unsaved state having their sin exposed by the law and thereby dying spiritually. There is discussion as to who

these unsaved persons are. Is it just Paul himself? Is it Paul speaking about Adam? Does the “I” refer to the Jewish people as a whole, represented by Paul? Is it talking about every person? While these are questions and options worth pursuing, yet because there is general agreement that this pictures the unregenerate, we will move on to the third and final section of chapter 7.

There are two possible logical options. As we consider vss. 13 (14) – 25, are we to view the person depicted here as a regenerate man or an unregenerate man? It is true that Lloyd-Jones opts for a third position, that the man depicted here is neither regenerate nor unregenerate. He is sort of half way in between. But that flies in the face of how Scriptures clearly divide humanity into two, not three categories (a truth that the good Doctor would be the first to assert).

There are variations on the regenerate view. One view sees the “I” as a Christian who is fighting the battle against sin “in his own strength”, without depending on the Holy Spirit. This is the Keswick position, the higher life, deeper life teaching, the carnal Christian theory, that calls for a full surrender, and letting go and letting God. The believer must get out of Romans 7 into Romans 8 and live life in the Spirit.

The mainstream view, followed by Augustine in his later years, the majority of the Reformers, the Puritans and still today by many of their successors, is that the man in Romans 7 is indeed regenerate. Not only is he regenerate, but he represents all true believers, even the most mature, as they experience the frustration of continually coming short of that perfect obedience to God’s law that they so desperately long for, but in this life cannot attain. Paul himself is expressing how he felt all through his Christian life. “Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” He looks ahead to the coming resurrection and cries out, “Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

An alternate interpretation sees vss. 13-25 as continuing to picture an unregenerate person. This person agrees that the law is good, but finds himself completely unable to keep it. Instead of doing what he knows is right, he continually fails. He keeps on doing evil. He is therefore a wretched man, unable to escape from the bondage of sin, which is increased by the law and leads to death. But, there is hope! Hope in God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. This was the position held by the majority of the church fathers in the first three centuries A.D. and by an increasing number in our own day.

## II. The Context

When considering the broader scope of the entire Scriptures, we must reject the Keswick-type approach as not in keeping with the active participation of the believer in the work of progressive sanctification. Phil. 2:13 “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” is immediately preceded by Phil. 2:12 “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Also, it does not square with what we know elsewhere about the apostle Paul to suggest that he was ever in a position as a believer where he needed to get out of Romans 7 and get into Romans 8 in the Keswick sense.

What does the broader context of Scripture have to say as we look at the mature believer view? In other passages, do we find indications that even the most mature saint will come short in this life of that perfect conformity to Christ that we long for? Absolutely. 1 Jn. 1:8 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” 1 Jn. 2:1 “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” In this life we have a huge battle on our hands, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

And does the broader context of Scripture support the thought that only at the coming of the Lord Jesus and the resurrection will the saints know final deliverance from all remaining sin? Clearly it does. 1 Jn. 3:2b promises, “...but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

How, then, does the view that this pictures the unregenerate man square with the broader sweep of Scripture? Are there indications that those under the law, particularly the unregenerate Jews of Paul’s day, had a high regard for the law? The accusation against Stephen was, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law” (Acts 6:13). Those were fighting words! Similarly, at Jerusalem the Jews from Asia cried out concerning Paul, “This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place...” (Acts 21:28).

Did their pride in the law translate into obedience and a heart holiness that God would accept? Clearly not. Paul says, “...Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law” (Ro. 9:31). In spite of their love for the law, were they still enslaved to and under the

dominion of sin? Yes! Paul warns in his allegory in Galatians, “Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children” (Gal. 4:25).

And is God to be thanked that through union with Christ and the gift and power of the Holy Spirit believers can be rescued from their slavery and impotence? Can they expect to have any victory over sin’s dominion in this life? Eph. 6:10, 11 encourages us, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”

Brothers and sisters, these references to the broader context of Scripture have been intentionally brief, and could be greatly expanded, but the point is this. It shouldn’t surprise us that both the “mature regenerate” position and the “unregenerate” position can point to many passages that would support their overall view.

However, the question is not only, “Is my position on these verses found in other parts of Scripture?” The question is also, “Which approach best fits the narrower context of the book of Romans and the chapters and verses immediately preceding and following vs. 13-25?”

Here is where I tip my hand. I would argue that seeing the man in Romans 7 as an unregenerate man, particularly as a Jew still married to the law and without the Spirit, fits the immediate context far better than seeing him as every true believer.

Follow with me these trains of thought in Romans. ***Consider first of all the three entities that Paul links together in this letter. He links sin, death and the law.***

(sin and the law linked together)

**3:20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

**5:13** for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

**5:20** Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

**6:14** For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

**7:7** What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

**7:8** But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead.

**7:23** but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

**8:3** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

(sin and death linked together)

**5:12** Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned-

**5:21** so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**6:13** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

**6:16** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

**6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**7:13** Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

(the law, sin and death all linked together)

**7:5** For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

**8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Paul's main point in chapters 6, 7 and into 8 is that through union with Christ instead of Adam, believers are now no longer under the reign and rule of sin which leads to death and which is aggravated by being under the law, but are now released and under the reign of grace, having life through the indwelling Spirit. We are now equipped to battle sin successfully and become slaves to righteousness. We are not to continue in sin. The triumvirate of law, sin and death has met its match through Christ and the Spirit and life!

Ask yourself, "What kind of context does the language of 7:13-25 point to?" It is a context where there is sin, death and the law, with the flesh unable to do what is right. Surely that describes the unregenerate man, still united to Adam and without the Spirit.

***Our second train of thought is to see the pattern in Paul's arguments in Romans 6 and 7.*** Four times in a row he follows this pattern. First he poses a rhetorical question. Secondly, he issues a vehement negative. Then, thirdly, he gives an extended rationale for that strong negative response.

This occurs in 6:1ff., 6:15ff., 7:7ff. and 7:13ff.

First, the rhetorical questions:

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”

“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

“What then shall we say? That the law is sin?”

“Did that which is good, then, bring death to me?”

Secondly, the vehement negative response:

“By no means!”

“By no means!”

“By no means!”

“By no means!”

Thirdly, the extended rationale for that response:

6:2-14 - Arguments showing why we cannot live in sin, because of union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

6:15-7:6 – Arguments showing why we cannot live in sin, because of (6:16-23) our new master/slave relationship and (note the “or” that introduces chapter 7 – Paul is switching imagery to make the same point in a different way) because of our new marriage relationship (married to Christ, not the law).

7:7-12 – Arguments to show the true relationship of the law to sin. The law is not sinful in and of itself, but when mixed with the gasoline of our sin, a consuming death-bringing fire begins to burn.

7:13-25 – Arguments to show that it was not the law itself that brings death. It is sin. It is the utter powerlessness of my flesh, the law of sin at work in my members that brings death.

We must not divorce vss. 14-25 from the leading question of vs. 13. The question answered by this entire section is not, “Will a believer still struggle with sin after they are saved?” It is, (vs. 13) “Did that which is good, then, bring death to me?”. Vs. 14 does not change the subject. That is crystal clear because it begins with “For...”. Paul is going to prove his point, that it was “sin, producing death in me”.

This cannot be describing a believer, because as 8:2 so beautifully declares, “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”

***Our third train of thought*** concerns Paul’s description of the person in vss. 13-25 as not being “spiritual”, but “of the flesh”, of being “sold under sin”, of being made “captive to the law of sin” and “serving the law of sin”. The question I want us to ask, is not “Do you sometimes feel like this describes you?” Rather, it is, ***“How does Paul describe the condition of every believer’s life in the context of ch. 6, 7, and 8?”***

6:2 – “..we...died to sin”

6:7 – “For one who has died has been set free from sin.”

6:11 – “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin...”

6:12 – “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”

6:14 – “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

6:15 – “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

6:17 – “...you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart...”

6:18 – “having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness”

6:22 – “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God...”

7:6 – “But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”

8:7-9 – “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit...”

To call the man of Romans 7 a true believer appears to me to fly in the face of overwhelming contextual evidence to the contrary.

### III. Difficulties that must be explained

There are *three main objections* that are often raised to the unregenerate view.

The *first* is that the person in vss. 14-25 is portrayed as “agreeing with the law, that it is good” (vs. 16), as having the “desire to do what is right” ( vs. 18), as one who delights “in the law of God in my inner being” (vs. 22) and as serving “the law of God with my mind” (vs. 25).

Surely, this kind of description cannot be true of an unbeliever, the argument goes. Is not this rather the Psalm 1 and Psalm 119 child of God? Almost thou persuadest me to think it is a Christian! However, the big difference between Psalm 1 and 119 and our text is that the person in Psalm 1 doesn’t walk in the counsel of the wicked, but is a prospering, green, fruitful tree. And in Psalm 119, he doesn’t simply agree with the law, but walks in the law of the Lord and keeps His testimonies and does no wrong! (Ps. 119:1-3). This, of course, is not perfect obedience, but it is a far cry from “...I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (7:19).

But, still, how can a totally depraved sinner delight in the law of God in his inner being? Here is where the broader context may help us. Paul has been labouring to defend himself against the false accusation that he is despising and denigrating the law. Why did he feel the need to do that? Because of the high esteem the Jews of his day had for the law. Romans 2:17-



29 addresses that. "...you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law...You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law" (vss. 17, 18, 23). In 9:31 we're told that Israel "pursued a law that would lead to righteousness", but they "did not succeed in reaching that law". Think about the rich young ruler, the Pharisees, and of Paul himself. In their own misguided and deceived way, they delighted in the law of God, while failing to keep it the way God intended. As for the "inner being", while it is true that the believer's inner being is being renewed day by day, it is also true that every human being is both body (outer person) and soul or spirit (inner person), so the mere fact that it is mentioned in Romans 7 doesn't mean this person is saved.

Even today, there are many unsaved people around us who agree with moral laws and high standards of conduct. When I speak to the students and teachers on Remembrance Day in our public school in Delhi, they are practically unanimous in agreeing that they would love to have a world where there was no war, where neighbours loved each other and shared what they had with those less fortunate, and where greed and cruelty and selfishness were a thing of the past. But in the hallway and classroom and on the playground, sin kicks in, and it soon becomes evident that they are still slaves of sin.

The **second objection** that is raised to the unregenerate view is that starting in verse 14 and continuing throughout the rest of the chapter, Paul uses the present tense. This change from the past tense of the previous section is then taken as a clear indicator that Paul is now presenting to us his present and ongoing experience as a mature believer. "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin" (vs. 14). He doesn't say, "I was", or "I used to be of the flesh."

If all other indicators lined up, no one would hesitate to assume that the present tense pointed to Paul's present experience as a believer, but the present tense in Greek does not always point to present time. Dana and Mantey, in [A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament](#), indicate that time of action and kind of action are both functions of the Greek verb. However, with "kind of action being the chief idea involved, for *time is a minor consideration in the Greek verb.*"<sup>1</sup> As a general rule, the present tense conveys the idea of continuous or habitual action. This fits well with the state of the unregenerate man. He lives in habitual disobedience to God's law. This usage can be termed the "customary present". Dana and Mantey explain, "The present tense may be used to denote that which habitually occurs...In this

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<sup>1</sup> Dana and Mantey, p. 177

usage the temporal element is remote, even in the indicative, since the act or state is assumed to be true in the past or future, as well as the present.”<sup>2</sup>

Another special use of the present tense in Greek is the “historical present”. Dana and Mantey tell us, “The present tense is thus employed when a past event is viewed with the vividness of a present occurrence.”<sup>3</sup> Paul is certainly painting for us a very powerful and vivid picture of a sinner who is never able to win the battle against the law of sin that dwells within him. The historic present tense would be a very appropriate choice in order to create a picture of desperation and hopelessness.

We use this approach in English as well. “Guess what happened yesterday? I go to see my sister. She says to me... Then I say to her... We have a big fight! But afterwards we quiet down and make up.” The historic present.

The **third objection** raised against the unregenerate view is the way Romans 7 ends. After the cry of desperation, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”, the apostle exultingly says, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”. Now, if this indeed is an unregenerate man who is now rejoicing in deliverance from slavery to sin through Jesus, why would he then go on to say, “So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”?

But if this is a mature believer, living with the ongoing struggle against sin, then this all makes sense. At the same time that he rejoices in Jesus Christ and the coming deliverance at His return, the believer also continues to experience the inward struggle with sin.

This order, though, is not surprising when we are familiar with Paul’s letters. Paul will often break into his present train of thought with a burst of praise to God, or a brief parenthesis, and then, just as quickly pick up where he left off. This, I believe, is exactly what happens here. Paul joyfully anticipates what he is about to introduce in chapter 8, and then returns to draw chapter 7 to a conclusion by describing how hopeless a sinner’s situation is when faced with the impossibility of keeping the law that he knows is holy and righteous and good.

In this paper, we don’t have time to raise **the difficulties that must be faced if the mature regenerate view is taken**, then give the answers and then critique those answers! So, we will simply raise some of the objections and leave it to you to work through the rest for yourselves.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.183

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 185

Here they are:

Why is there no mention of the Holy Spirit in this entire passage?

How can a true believer be “of the flesh”, “sold under sin”, have “nothing good dwelling in me”, have “not the ability to carry it out” (what is good), habitually “keep on doing evil”, be “captive to the law of sin”, be “a wretched man”, and “be a slave to the law of sin”?

If true believers are not under law and not slaves of sin and delivered from death, why is this triumvirate back on the scene in full force? Where is the reign of grace, righteousness and life?

How can 7:23 be describing the same person (a mature believer) as 8:2?

7:23 – “But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.”

8:2 – “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”

How does the wretched man view of the Christian life square with 1 Jn. 3:6-9?

<sup>6</sup> No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup> Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup> Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup> No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

I leave those difficulties with you.

#### **IV. Practical Implications**

At first glance, it might seem that it really doesn't matter which interpretation of Romans 7 you hold to, as long as you have your view of salvation and the Christian life molded by the rest of Scripture. Great men of God who believe that this passage is describing the struggles and defeats of a true Christian, also believe in the power and work of the Holy Spirit in every saint's life, and of the need to “pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14)

Also, men of God who believe that this particular passage describes an unconverted sinner who is still under the law and yet failing miserably to keep it, still believe that a true Christian will have a life-long battle with sin, will have to say daily, “Forgive us our trespasses”, and must wait for the coming of Christ to be made perfectly like Him.

### ***A hyper-Calvinism in progressive sanctification***

But, I do think that holding to and preaching the mature regenerate view of Romans 7 can lead to a type of hyper-Calvinism in one’s view of progressive sanctification. Notice, I did not say, “will” lead to, but “can” lead to.

Let me explain. Why should I feel too guilty or too concerned about my failure to deal with remaining sin in my life, especially if even the great apostle Paul could say, “the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing?” That is normal. Mortification of sin in this life is a losing battle. Sure, we should keep fighting, but don’t expect to win.

That, brothers and sisters, is so dangerous, as I’m sure you will agree. We must fight with the expectation of victory through Christ. Did you notice that every single letter to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 ends by addressing “the one who conquers”. The Scriptures do hold out for us the “victorious” Christian life. Paul does say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”! Galatians 5 does speak of both the flesh and the Spirit, but remember that all those who practice the works of the flesh “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (vs. 21) while those who belong to Christ Jesus “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (vs. 24).

There is the “already” and the “not yet” in the Christian life. We must steer clear of the perfectionist imbalance of thinking that the “not yet” has already arrived. But, I fear that in terms of progressive sanctification, in present day sovereign grace circles, there has not been enough emphasis on what is possible NOW, and how diligently we should work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. With Paul we must say, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal...” (Phil. 3:12, 13). The last thing our generation needs is to be told that constantly losing the battle against sin and Satan and this world in this life is a viable option and only to be expected.

Yes, there is always the danger of pride and self-confidence. Paul warns the church, “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). But then he continues, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful,

and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

We have been given the resources to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Ja. 4:7) as we do so humbly and dependently, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Ja. 4:6). God does not hold out before the believer an ongoing life of falling before the attacks of Satan and the powers of darkness. He says, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm" (Eph. 6:13).

The Keswick movement may not have gotten all of their theology straight, but they certainly had their aspirations and the direction they wanted to go straight! I fear that in our day we are in danger of losing the fire, the drive, the longing, the eager pursuit of holiness. Where is the cry today found in Oatman's hymn "Higher Ground"?

"I want to live above the world,  
 Tho Satan's darts at me are hurled,  
 For faith has caught the joyful sound,  
 The song of saints on higher ground.  
 Lord, lift me up and let me stand  
 By faith on heaven's tableland;  
 A higher plane than I have found-  
 Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

If our view of Romans 7 has led us into a psychology of defeat and passivity, then may God correct that, for our own spiritual health, and for the spiritual health of the believers we seek to help.

### ***Toward a more Biblical self-assessment***

Romans 7:13-25 is a powerfully, emotionally-charged, vivid picture. "O wretched man that I am!" is a heart-wrenching cry. If we think it describes how true believers are to look at themselves on a daily basis, then this gripping description could so dominate our self-assessment that we may tend to ignore a host of other passages that point in another direction. If a wrong interpretation of Romans 7 becomes the filter through which we pour all other passages, we may end up ignoring those texts that don't pass through that filter.

Do the following assessments sit well with you?

A believer who is blameless and upright, fears God and turns away from evil. (Job.1:1)

One who keeps the ways of the Lord and has not wickedly departed from his God (Ps. 18:21)

A couple who were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. (Lu. 1:6)

Believers who are full of goodness. (Ro. 15:14)

A believer whose conduct, patience, love and steadfastness is worthy of imitating. (2 Tm. 3:10)

Elders who are above reproach, self-controlled, well thought of by outsiders. (1 Tm. 3:1-7)

A woman full of good works. (Ac. 9:36)

Widows who have devoted themselves to every good work. (1 Tm. 5:10)

That whoever does good is from God and whoever does evil has not seen God. (3 Jn. 1:11)

A believer whose conduct is self-described as holy and righteous and blameless. (1 Th. 2:10)

Is it really the mark of a mature believer to bemoan every day how wicked and sinful and evil he/she still is? Do the Scriptures encourage us to think that way?

As Tom Wells' book title declares, "*Christian, Take Heart!*". We are not yet what we will be at the return of Christ. We still must confess and forsake sin all of our earthly lives. But, we are not what we once were outside of Christ! We are part of God's new creation! We are no longer under the law and slaves of sin! The fruit of the Spirit is being produced in us! We are being changed from one degree of glory to another as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

### ***Romans 7 – a perfect passage for evangelism***

Who are the wretched men and women, boys and girls of Romans 7? It is all of those unsaved sinners who realize that they should live up to a much higher standard of morality than they are. With their minds they assent to that, but because of the powerlessness of law to change them and the presence of the law of sin and death within them, they are completely unable to change the course of their sinful lives.

But we have the answer! With joy and relief we cry out, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" There is a way. Jesus Christ is that way. He is the only way. Dear friends, union with Adam brought us into condemnation and death. Union with Christ is God's glorious solution. You don't have to be wretched any longer! Are you in Him?

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