

Study 7

NOTHING GOOD IN ME

Romans 7

In The Group

- ◆ What have you learned about yourself in the past two weeks?
- ◆ Who have you shared your testimony of salvation with in the past two weeks?
- ◆ What challenges are you currently facing?

Paul was partly writing to an audience which was struggling to understand how Christianity was not some mere sect of Judaism. It was, as he explains to them, based on a completely *new* covenant. Therefore, allegiance to Jewish worship practices such as animal sacrifices, ceremonies, or festivals, were no longer necessary. This ‘Law’ had been satisfied by Christ and done away with.

ABOUT COVENANTS

A ‘covenant’ is an agreement between two parties. These parties might include, a king with his people, a man making peace with his enemy, a man and his wife, a nation with another nation, or God with certain people. All covenants have an agreement, a set of obligations, certain benefits, and penalties for breaking it. A covenant had to be mediated (someone had to bring the two parties together and announce the agreement/obligations/benefits/penalties), then witnessed, then commemorated, then made public. Thus, if two people formed a covenant, such as Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:44-54), they went through this process. Such a covenant was binding between two parties as long as they both lived. When we consider the Old Covenant that God made with Israel, we can see that this covenant was *mediated* by High Priests, witnessed by the whole nation, commemorated through sacrifices and ceremonies, and declared to the nations.

1. In Romans 7:1, Paul sums up the Old Covenant as “the Law” (since the Law was central to the Mosaic Covenant). What connection does he introduce between the death of Jesus and the end of the Old Covenant? Circle the correct answer-
 - a. The death of Jesus had no bearing on the Law (‘the Old Covenant’).
 - b. Jesus had to die because He broke the Law.
 - c. When Jesus, A.K.A. *God* - and therefore the One who made the Old Covenant with Israel, had to die so that the Old Covenant could come to an end and make its requirements obsolete.
 - d. Jesus tried as hard as He could to keep the Law, but He failed.

Paul assumes that his audience understands that *marriage* is the clearest and closest covenant to most people. What Paul says about the Law (‘the Old Covenant’) is illustrated by marriage. Marriage was instituted by God to reveal both Himself and the means by which mankind could relate to Him. It still serves this purpose today.

2. Because marriage is designed to be an unbreakable commitment between two people, what is the one thing that brings it to an end, according to Romans 7:2-3, and what does this mean about the Old Covenant?

Sin has caused us all to be born as *rebels*. There is something intrinsic in us that resents anyone telling us what we can and cannot do! Thus, when the Law tells us what we *cannot* do, it arouses in our rebellious natures a deep desire to do that very thing!

3. The Apostle Paul not only says that the Law of the Old Covenant has ended because Jesus Christ died, he also says that someone else has died which has further resulted in the Law having no affect on us. Who else has ‘died’ and in what way have they ‘died’? (Romans 7:4-6)

4. Romans 7:6 highlights one of the major differences between the Old Covenant Law and the New Covenant. What is this particular difference mentioned in this verse and why is it so important for Christians to understand?

5. If the Law provokes us to defy it, then surely the Law is the cause of sin? How does Paul answer this in Romans 7:7? What vital purpose did the Law serve?

6. Although the Law highlighted and aroused our rebellion, it was not the Law that *caused* us to rebel. What does Paul say in Romans 7:11 (and verses 13 and 20) is the cause of our rebellion, and therefore our spiritual death?

Sin immediately caused mankind to *blame-shift*. When God confronted Adam in the Garden of Eden immediately after he sinned, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. As Christians, God has given us a new heart and empowered us with His Holy Spirit to live holy, righteous and good lives (this was the *potential* of the Law, Romans 7:12). As we grow in Christ we will blame less and less. This means that we will increasingly become aware of our own *wretchedness* (Romans 7:24).

7. How is simply *knowing* what is right and wrong not sufficient to keep a person from doing wrong? (Romans 7:14-19)

Entering into the New Covenant is not merely about acquiring new head knowledge. It involves inner transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works in us before our conversion by revealing to us our true condition (note John 16:8).

8. What *is* our condition without Christ and the transforming work of His Spirit? (Romans 7:18)

9. Note Romans 7:21-23. What two 'Laws' did Paul recognise in his own life?

Paul has described the person who continues to approach God on the basis of self-effort. There are many Christians who know what is right and good and strive with all their heart to do it *so that they can win God's approval and ultimately be saved*. Striving in our own strength to be all that God wants us to be and fulfil what He requires of us, is impossible. Yet many persist in attempting to do just this.

The New Covenant is ministered to the ones that the Holy Spirit has prepared. The Spirit's transforming work of forgiveness and new life is given unconditionally and freely. Those whom He transforms are in one sense transformed immediately but in a different sense being continually transformed. It is when someone confuses these two differing transformations that condemnation becomes inevitable.

10. What does Romans 7 teach us about the Gospel?

11. Who can you share with this week, what you have now just learned?

12. In which part of this study did you sense God was speaking to *you*? How so?

13. Write out your prayerful response to God -

Amen.