
Why I Cannot Quit

The struggle between the Law, Sin, and me

Romans 7

THE QUESTION THAT MOST PEOPLE STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION INVARIABLY ASK IS, "*Why can't I just quit?*" It has been my experience that most individuals with an addiction truly want to stop. They may have the best intentions, but after repeated attempts to quit, eventually some believe that their situation is hopeless. It's this sense of hopelessness that leads many to believe that addiction is an overpowering disease that is impossible to overcome. Fortunately, addiction is not a disease and fully recovery is possible! However, to get there, we need to first answer this fundamental question, "*Why can't I just quit?*"

The question "*Why can't I just quit?*" is a tough question for the Christian who is eager to commit his or her life to Christ. Some Christians struggling with addiction may begin to doubt their salvation or believe that God has abandoned them in their darkest hour of need. When that happens, I Christian cannot truly live the abundant life Christ promised in John 10:10, "I have come so that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (KJV).

Sacred Scripture holds the key for the Christian struggling with addiction. Paul gives us powerful insight into the human condition in Romans Chapter 7. In this worksheet, you can read and answer study questions that will help you understand why you have an addiction and, more importantly, what you can do to overcome this struggle.

Before you begin your study on the following pages, pray that God will open your heart and your eyes to his revealed truth and lead you into all righteousness:



Dear heavenly Father, you say in your word that "those who hunger and thirst for your righteousness will be filled." God, I want to be filled with your truth and live a life that is holy and pleasing to you. Open my heart today and help me understand your holy word as I commit my life to studying your will for me in Romans 7.

I. Scripture Study

This study is from Romans chapter 7. All scripture notions below are from the NIV. You can follow along in another translation that you are familiar with if that enriches your study. Think about each answer carefully and be honest about your life and current situation. This is between you and God. You may also need to read each Scripture section several times to gain a deeper understanding.

Read Romans 7:1-6

'Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?'² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.³ So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.⁴ So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.⁵ For when we were in the realm of the flesh,^[a] the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

- 1. Who is Paul specifically speaking to? Why do you think who he is speaking to in this chapter is important?**

- 2. How does 2 Corinthians 5:17 teach you about your relationship to the Law and its authority in your life as a Christian?**

- 3. As a Christian, do who do you now serve?**

 **Read Romans 7:7-13**

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.

⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

4. What is the purpose of the Law?

5. What happens when we become conscious of sin?

6. Paul said that sin "used what is good to bring about my death." What does he mean (read Romans 6:5-6)?

7. Is it possible to follow the law perfectly (see Romans 3:9-19)?

8. What is the role of faith in living a righteous life (see Romans 1:16,17)?

 **Read Romans 7:14-20**

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^[2] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

9. Paul explains that he (in his natural state) is a slave? What or who is he a slave to?

10. If he hates sin, why does Paul continue to do what he does not want to do?

 **Read Romans 7:21-24**

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

11. How does Galatians 5:17 relate to the struggle Paul describes here?

12. What or who does Paul need to be rescued from?

II. Observations from this Chapter

Chapter 7 of Paul's epistle to the church in Rome has great implications for every Christian, especially those who struggle with the sin of addiction. This section contains observations that will bring more light to the purpose of Saint Paul's words, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and what God is teaching the Christian through Paul's struggle with sin.

"Mere knowledge is not enough to undercut the evil in the human heart. Simply knowing what is right doesn't enable us to do right."

- **Chuck Colson**

This chapter is Paul's dramatic testimony of his personal struggle with sin. It is not without controversy as commentators have struggled with the meaning of Paul's teaching here and his candid confessions of personal struggle. Indeed, it is hard for us to imagine that great men (and women) of God struggle with sin in their lives.

Paul is not unique. We all face a similar struggle. There is a war that wages within each and every Christian. Although we are saved, we continue to have a sinful nature that wars against our new spiritual nature in Christ:

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. (Galatians 5:17)

While it is true that justification is a singular act of God's grace, sanctification is a moment-by-moment process that is often painful. Keep in mind that you will not be completely liberated from your sinful nature until you are united with Christ in heaven. It is for this reason that you will need to continually work out your salvation:

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:11-13)*

As you work out your salvation, recognize that there may be setbacks along the way. This is not an indication that you have lost your salvation nor is it a sign that God has forsaken you. As Paul struggled, so shall you. Paul learned, however, that he needed to forget the past and press on towards the goal to ultimately win the prize:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

Living a righteous life in Christ is worth fighting for with every fiber of your being. Continue to press on and do not give up! If you are struggling with addiction, fight through the pain and frustration while focusing on the ultimate prize that is found in serving Christ fully. Make the necessary changes in your life so you can live from the love alcohol, drugs, and other things that keep you from experiencing a full, abundant life. Do not let momentary setbacks hold your back from achieving your goal. Focus on what is ahead of you rather than looking behind you. Remember that your past failures do not define who you are in Christ.

Most importantly, remember that God promises to be with you every step of the way: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deut. 31:6).

This promise is just as true today as when it was written by Moses thousands of years ago, which is why it was repeated by the author of Hebrews. He cannot leave you because His Spirit dwells within you and He will give you life through that same Spirit:

*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his **Spirit who lives in you.** (Romans 8:11)*