

The event that split history into “before” and “after” and changed the world took place about thirty years before Paul wrote this letter. The event - the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus - took place in a remote corner of the extensive Roman Empire. The province of Judea in Palestine. Hardly anyone noticed, certainly no one in busy and powerful Rome.

And when this letter arrived in Rome, hardly anyone read it, certainly no one of influence. There was much to read in Rome - imperial decrees, exquisite poetry, finely crafted moral philosophy - and much of it was world-class. And yet in no time, as such things go, this letter left all those other writings in the dust. Paul's letter to the Romans has had a far larger impact on its readers than the volumes of all the Roman writers put together.

The quick rise of this letter to a peak of influence is extraordinary, written as it was by an obscure Roman citizen without connections. But when we read it for ourselves, we begin to realize that it is the letter itself that is truly extraordinary, and that no obscurity in writer or readers could have kept it obscure for long.

The letter to the Romans is a piece of exuberant and passionate thinking. This is the glorious life of the mind enlisted in the service of God. Paul takes the well-witnessed and devoutly believed fact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and thinks through its implications. How does it happen that in the death and resurrection of Jesus, world history took a new direction, and at the same moment the life of every man, woman, and child on the planet was eternally affected? What is God up to? What does it mean that Jesus “saves”? What's behind all this, and where is it going?

These are the questions that drive Paul's thinking. Paul's mind is supple and capacious. He takes logic and argument, poetry and imagination, Scripture and prayer, creation and history and experience, and weaves them into this letter that has become the premier document of Christian theology.

#### **Commentary on Romans from The Bible Project:**

- <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/romans-1-4/>
- <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/romans-5-16/>

#### **Commentary on themes in Romans from The Bible Project:**

- Holiness: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/holiness/>
- The Law: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/law/>
- Sacrifice and Atonement: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/sacrifice-and-atonement/>
- Covenants: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/covenants/>

#### **Overview of Romans from [bible.org](https://bible.org):**

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/56-romans>

#### **Commentary on Romans 7 from [bible.org](https://bible.org):**

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/12-relationship-between-rules-and-righteousness-romans-71-6>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/13-loveliness-law-and-ugliness-sin-romans-77-13>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/14-war-within-romans-714-25>

## **READ Romans 7**

(The following discussion questions are adapted from The Serendipity Bible)

### *Opening*

- When you were dating, did you ever get caught two-timing? Did anyone two-time you?
- When you were a teenager, what was one of your biggest struggles?
- What New Year's resolution have you started with good intentions only to have it fizzle out?

### *Digging in — Discovering the Word*

- Using the allegory of marriage, who were you married to originally (vv.1-4)? How did that marriage work out?
- When Paul says, "we have been released from the law" (v.6), what implication does this have for Christian living? How does this make you feel?
- What kinds of legalism do Christians fall prey to?
- How close did your week come to illustrating the statement: I do not understand what I do?
- From reading this passage what is your impression about Paul?
- According to Paul, what purpose does the Law serve?
- Why do you think God's law was given:
  - a) means to follow in order to be saved
  - b) guide to follow once we are saved by grace?
  - c) stumbling block, impossible to follow, which only points the sinner to God's grace?
  - How do verses 10,12, and 22 support your answer?
- What is the root problem which Paul exposes through his own example (vv.14-24)?
- In the midst of his frustrating struggle, what is Paul's hope (vv.24-25)?
- What can you give thanks to God for despite the struggles you have?

### *Connecting the Dots — Applying the Word*

- In your life, are you bearing more fruit for God (v.4) or fruit for death (v.5)?
- What is one way you can "serve in the new way of the Spirit" (v.6) this week?
- In what area of your life is the spirit willing but the flesh weak: Diet? Work habits? Spiritual disciplines? Exercise? Relationship reconciliation? Other?
- In light of your own struggles with sin, how do you feel about Paul's conflict? How is this model for a healthy, realistic self-image? How is it a model for taking appropriate responsibility?