

- **There is a direct correlation between our growth in God’s Word and our sensitivity to the distinction between the imaginations of our thoughts and the temptations of our heart.**
  - Our knowledge of Christ’s leading us and Satan’s attempts to appeal to us will also become clearer to understand.
  - Remember the promise of Jesus, **John 10:27** “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me...”
  - As we get to know our Great Shepherd and as, through experience, we grow with Him, His leading of us will become more and more clear in our own hearts and lives.
- **Warren Wiersbe’s book, *The Strategy of Satan*, is a tactical manual in which he lays out the battle of the Christian life.**
- In his book, he also outlines 4 specific areas in which Satan comes against the believer.
- **Part 1: The Deceiver (Targeting the Mind)**
  - **The Strategy:** Using lies to distort God’s Word and make us ignorant of His will.
  - **The Weapon:** Scripture (Lies vs. Truth).
  - **The Defense: The Word of God.**
  - Satan’s first words in the Bible were "Has God indeed said...?"
  - Victory comes through knowing, memorizing, and meditating on the Bible.
- **Part 2: The Destroyer (Targeting the Body)**
  - **The Strategy:** Using suffering and physical affliction to make us impatient with God’s will.
  - **The Weapon:** Physical and emotional pain (Affliction vs. Grace).
  - **The Defense: The Grace of God.**
  - Wiersbe uses the example of Job.
  - The goal is to keep our eyes on the "eternal weight of glory" rather than temporary pain.
- **Part 3: The Ruler (Targeting the Will)**
  - **The Strategy:** Using pride to make us independent of God’s will.
  - **The Weapon:** Self-sufficiency (Pride vs. Humility).
  - **The Defense: The Spirit of God.**
  - Satan wants us to rely on our own talents, money, and logic.
  - Victory requires total surrender and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Part 4: The Accuser (Targeting the Heart/Conscience)**
  - **The Strategy:** Using accusation to make us feel rejected by God and unworthy of His will.
  - **The Weapon:** Guilt (Accusation vs. Intercession).
  - **The Defense: The Son of God.**

- Satan points to our sins to discourage us after we fall.
- Victory is found in the intercession of Jesus Christ as our High Priest.
- Notice the attacks from Satan come against us in our mind, our body, our will and our emotion.
- This would represent a total assault from Satan upon us so that we are no longer able to live for God.
- All that he attacks, we have been given new from God because of our regeneration.
- **Our Mind:**
  - **Romans 12:2** “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
  - **1 Corinthians 2:16** “For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”
  - “Satan's first device to draw the soul to sin is, to present the bait—and hide the hook; to present the golden cup—and hide the poison; to present the pleasure, the profit, the sweet, the glory of sin—and to hide the sin-revenging justice of God.”<sup>1</sup>
    - This illustrates how Satan attacks the **Understanding** by creating a false reality where sin appears harmless.
- **Our Will:**
  - **1 Peter 4:2** “...so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”
  - **Philippians 2:13** “...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
  - “Satan’s device to keep the soul from holy duties is, to present the difficulty of the duty, the tediousness of the duty, and the long time that must be spent in the duty; so that the soul may say, ‘It is better to sit still, than to rise and fall; it is better to do nothing, than to do that which I cannot do with ease.’”
    - This targets the **Will** by making the effort of obedience seem too heavy to bear, leading the person to choose ease over God’s command.
- **Our Emotion:**
  - **Romans 5:5** “...and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”
  - **Colossians 3:15** “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes under each point from Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*.

- “Satan's device to keep the soul in a sad, doubting, questioning, and soul-distressing condition is, by causing the soul to be always poring upon sin, to the end that the soul may be even swallowed up of sorrow and despair.”
  - This targets the **Affections** (emotions) by shifting the heart's focus from the joy of God's mercy to a paralyzing obsession with one's own failures.
- **Our Body:**
  - **Romans 6:13** “...and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”
  - **Romans 12:1** “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”
  - “Satan presents the world in all its glory and splendor, to the end he may bewitch the soul and draw the heart from God; he presents the riches, the honors, and the pleasures of the world to the eye of the body, that he may thereby blind the eye of the soul.”
    - This targets the **Physical Senses** (the body), using outward visual and physical stimuli to distract the internal spiritual man.
- Brooks argues that for every “device” (attack) in these areas, there is a “precious remedy.”
  - To the **Mind**: Study the Word to “see through” the devil’s schemes.
  - To the **Will**: Meditate on the “shortness of life” and the “certainty of judgment.”
  - To the **Emotions**: Keep your heart “full of Christ” so there is no room for the world.
  - To the **Body**: Practice “holy discipline” and do not give the flesh an inch.
- Also in his book, *The Strategy of Satan*, Wiersbe lays out a three-point plan as a diagnostic tool which one can use to determine if what you are going through is a natural life struggle or satanic attack.
- **The Source: Is it from God or from the Enemy?**
  - **The test**: Does this situation line up with the Word of God?
  - **The Logic**: God never uses lies, pride, or unauthorized fear to lead His children.
  - **The Indicator**: If the solution to your problem requires you to disobey a biblical principle, the source is the enemy.
- **The Motive: What is the Goal?**
  - **The Test**: Does this pressure make me more dependent on God or more independent?
  - **The Logic**: God’s discipline (Hebrews 12) is designed to make us partakers of His holiness.
  - Satan’s attacks are designed to make us bitter, self-reliant, or hopeless.

- **The Indicator:** If the trial is driving you toward isolation and pride, it is likely a satanic strategy. If it is driving you toward prayer and humility, it is either God’s refining fire or a natural life trial.
- **The Timing: Why now?**
  - **The Test:** Is this happening right before a spiritual breakthrough or right after a spiritual victory?
  - **The Logic:** Wiersbe notes that Satan often attacks when we are most vulnerable—either when we are on the mountain (pride) or in the valley (exhaustion).
  - **The Indicator:** If you are about to start a new ministry, make a major life change for God, or have just experienced a deep spiritual success, unusual obstacles are often targeted attacks intended to derail your momentum.
- While Satan is not behind every rock nor are demons always specifically aimed at you; we are to be sober and vigilant.
  - **1 Peter 5:8** “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
- Brooks said, “Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor, and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure, and pays with pain; he promises profit, and pays with loss.”
- Satan is never going to come at you with the worst-case scenario.
- He is never going to give you the truth regarding the consequences of your actions.

### **Excurses: How does Satan interact with our hearts and minds?**

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- “Perhaps the most perplexing temptations are the ones that arise from within so that we experience them in the thoughts of our minds or the desires of our hearts. Sometimes evil thoughts come when we have been looking at evil images or reading evil words, but sometimes evil thoughts come when we have been looking at beautiful images or reading beautiful words. Sometimes evil desires follow evil stimuli or inputs, but sometimes they arise when we have been joyfully avoiding evil and pursuing good. And it is in these times more than any other that we may wonder: Where did these thoughts come from? Why am I experiencing these desires?”<sup>2</sup>
- The question is often asked, *can Satan<sup>3</sup> put thoughts into my mind? If so...how?*
- The 4<sup>th</sup> century Desert Fathers (monks) wrote a lot about the battlefield of the mind and the intrusive thoughts that Christians were susceptible to throughout their lives.
- They called these thoughts and images *logismoi*...intrusive, assaultive thoughts or thought forms. These are any thoughts that come upon someone to lead them further from Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.challies.com/articles/can-satan-put-thoughts-into-our-minds/>

<sup>3</sup> By Satan, this also includes all his demonic angels who follow him.

- These can be anything from sinful thoughts, to condemning thoughts, to doubtful thoughts...any thought that takes the believer's mind and focus from Jesus.
- “This topic is not a mere theological thought experiment, but a real and pressing issue, for many of us have had such experiences. It could be that as we begin to pray, we are suddenly inundated with thoughts that God may not exist or may not love us. It could be that as we begin to worship on Sunday morning, our minds are suddenly flooded with blasphemous thoughts.”<sup>4</sup>
- “Obviously we ought to consider if these thoughts have come from sin we have permitted or holiness we have failed to embrace. If we watch horror movies all evening, we should not be shocked if we experience nightmares in the night, and if we are completely lax in spiritual habits, we should not be shocked if we experience doubt.”<sup>5</sup>
- **1 Chronicles 21:1** “Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.”
- In both of these next scenarios, Satan is said to have inserted thoughts or desires into their hearts.
- **John 13:2** “During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him...”
- **Acts 5:3** “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?’”
- Jesus also talks about how Satan works; not by addition but by subtraction.
- **Matthew 13:19** “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.”
- There is also a way that our minds are attacked or influenced by Satan.
- **2 Corinthians 11:3** “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”
- “In one way or another, we can build a biblical case for Satan influencing us from within. We probably need to stop short of being too confident in suggesting the means through which he does this. Is it by directly inserting thoughts into our brains or somehow twisting our affections? Does he use a kind of neurological process similar to how we think and remember? We don't know. But while we can be confident that he cannot make us sin, it seems clear enough that he can tempt us toward it through some inward means.”<sup>6</sup>
- Looking throughout church history, there is a very common theme, that Satan has direct influence in the lives of Christians.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

- The problem is that there is no sufficient explanation, either biblically or historically, as to *how* this occurs in the life of the believer.
- “We don’t know exactly *how*. It’s these how questions that baffle us, isn’t it? We don’t know exactly how Satan interacts with our own sinful nature to do his ugly work. But I think it is fair to say that our own sinfulness is like an invitation, like a welcome mat and an open door to Satan.”<sup>7</sup>
- “...we should not be surprised if and when we suddenly find our minds or hearts inundated with evil thoughts or tempted to commit evil deeds. While we should always consider whether we have made ourselves vulnerable to these attacks, we do not necessarily need to assume this. We do not necessarily need to feel guilty that these thoughts have come upon us, to repent of them, or to assume we have made ourselves vulnerable to them, for it is entirely possible that Satan is afflicting us and tempting us to do what is evil.”<sup>8</sup>

### The Flesh

- We have talked about the world and the devil and how they are active and drawing us away from the things of Jesus.
- They are the external enemies. They are what we have to look out for as they come upon us.
- But what about the enemy within our own hearts?
- Remember, that even though the world and the devil are *outside* us, they use what is inside us to draw our affections and attention away from Jesus.
- “The enemies we face attack us from outside our own hearts and move inward with insistent force to draw our affections towards themselves and away from our Lord Jesus Christ. But their power rests on a further factor, namely the ‘landing ground’ they are able to find within our own lives.” (145)
- While sin no longer has any power over us, sin still has a landing place within us.
- The reason there is a battle within us is because we still have indwelling sin...or the flesh.
- When we became new creations and our hearts were regenerated, sin’s status changed, it no longer is our master, and our relationship to sin changed, we are no longer sin’s slaves. But sin’s presence is still here and its power, while broken in us, is still desiring to have each of us.
- The New Testament consistently talks about the believer’s new battle in terms of the flesh versus the Spirit. These two are always at odds and each desire to have control over the person.
- **Galatians 5:16-17, 19-21** “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. {17} For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ... {19} Now the deeds of the flesh are

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/can-satan-put-thoughts-into-our-heads>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.challies.com/articles/can-satan-put-thoughts-into-our-minds/>

evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, {20} idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, {21} envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

- “Consequently, among the sins of the flesh, Scripture lists activities of the mind as well as of the body.” (146)
  - It is important to distinguish between the unredeemed flesh which is in the believer and the new nature of the believer.
  - While certainly disputed, the believer does not have **two natures** in them, there is but **one nature**, that is their new holy nature.
  - What do both sides agree on? There is a war going on inside every believer. Every believer must strive to kill the sin that wants to take over and move onto holiness in their walk with the Lord.
  - Both sides also agree that the believer has a new heart, new mind, etc. and now must live in accordance with who they are in Christ.
  - **But, by teaching that two natures live inside the believer, this is tantamount to “spiritual schizophrenia.”**<sup>9</sup>
  - Can both the old nature *and* the new nature of Christ live in someone? Was our new holy nature simply added to who we already were? (the following chart is a summary of MacArthur’s teaching on the subject)
- | • Feature     | • The New Nature (New Self)              | • The Flesh (Humanness)                        |
|---------------|--|--|
| • Status      | • A transformed inner man                | • Unredeemed humanness                         |
| • Origin      | • Created in righteousness at salvation. | • Residual vestiges of the old life.           |
| • Location    | • The innermost self and soul.           | • The body, mind, and emotions.                |
| • Inclination | • Delights in the law of God.            | • A base camp or beachhead for sin.            |
| • Finality    | • Eternal and incorruptible.             | • Temporal; removed at death or glorification. |
- “I’ll give you a theological reason. You’ve got an epistemological problem or a problem in terminology. If I say that I have an old nature - okay? - what do I mean by that? I’m what? Not saved. Okay. If I say when I got saved, I got a new nature, how have I just described salvation? What is it? Addition. It isn’t addition. It is what? It’s transformation. And that is why I don’t like the idea - you know, the old deal, you got two dogs, a black dog and a white dog, who wins? The one you say, “Sic ’em” to, that kind of theology. I don’t like to think of my salvation as here I am, this wretched, corrupt person, and now somewhere in the midst of

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gty.org/sermons/90-37/ifca-meeting-6-26-89-part-2>

my wretched, corrupt nature God stuck a new nature. That doesn't transform me. That is inconsistent with Galatians 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ." What is crucifixion an emblem of? Death. I died. What died? My old ego. Nevertheless, I live, a new ego. I am a new creation in Christ. But that new creation is incarcerated in unredeemed flesh."<sup>10</sup>

- For the believer, their *flesh* as the Bible calls it, is the unrenewed mind, emotions, and will which will always exist until we get our new glorified bodies.
- **John Murray:** He significantly influenced this view in the 1940s, arguing that the old man is a historical designation of what we *were* in Adam, not a part of what we *are* now.
- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones:** He taught that the old man was crucified with Christ and no longer exists, though he still emphasized the intense warfare between the believer and the flesh.
- **J.I. Packer:** Though he acknowledged the struggle of indwelling sin, he contended for a one nature position.
- **John Piper:** ...emphasizing that the old self was crucified (Romans 6:6) and that the believer is a new creation in their essential nature.
- **Why is this a problem that needs clarity?**
- **Not Fully Saved:** If you have an unregenerate "old nature" still living inside you, you would be "half-saved and half-lost." It would be preferable to say you are a whole new person who still has sinful habits and unredeemed "humanness", or the flesh.
- **The Carnal Christian Myth:** One-nature proponents fear this view allows people to live in habitual sin while claiming they are saved but simply "living in their old nature." They argue this creates a false sense of security for people who may not be regenerated at all.
- **Low Expectations for Holiness:** If the old nature is permanent and unchanging until death, followers might assume total victory over certain sins is impossible, leading to a defeatist Christian life.
- **Undermining Regeneration:** They believe saying the old man still lives denies the power of the Cross. If the old man wasn't actually crucified (Romans 6:6), then the miracle of the "new creation" feels less like a transformation and more like a coat of paint.
- We have to remember that the Bible says that Christians are no longer *in the flesh*. Now, as those who are born again, we are *in the Spirit*.
  - **Romans 8:9** "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."
- While believers can *act* like the old man, they are no longer *in* the old man.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gty.org/sermons/90-37/ifca-meeting-6-26-89-part-2>

- If we had two natures, then we could be *either in the flesh or in the Spirit*. Since we have one nature, we are *in the Spirit* and at the same time fighting the sinfulness that still remains in us.
- We must make a very important distinction when talking about crucifying the flesh or killing sin.
- There is the act of God in which through our union with Christ our old self was crucified.
- **Romans 6:6** "...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin..."
- **Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."
- Then there is the daily act on our part to live in that new reality; to keep crucifying the flesh that has already been crucified.
- **Galatians 5:24** "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."
- **Colossians 3:5** "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry."
- This is a vital difference when dealing with our position before Christ and our daily practical living.
- **What does this look like in our daily living?**
- **James 1:13-15** "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. {14} But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. {15} Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."
- Notice that it is not an external temptation which is sinful. That is the "bait" that is outside of the person.
  - The sin occurs when the heart latches onto the bait and makes the willful choice to sin.
  - We can tell that the temptation has become sin when our desires are now turned in that direction and our minds begin to entertain what it would look or feel like.
- Theologians have broken this down into three stages of battle:
  - **Presentation of the bait...this is the temptation.**
    - This is the opportunity for your sinfulness to latch onto an impure thought, a prideful response, a chance to lie, etc.
  - **The affection from the heart.**
    - This is when you begin to consider the benefits of taking the bait. You start to warm up to the idea of what is being presented.
  - **Volitional act of the will.**

- Now you have taken the bait and decided that you would rather sin than follow God’s ways prescribed in the Bible.
- Here is why we must be on guard at all times against the world, the devil, and the flesh.
- **Our flesh has been crucified, but we now need to act like it is.**
- “We can’t pursue the kind of life God calls us to live if we don’t know what happened to us when became a Christian.”<sup>11</sup>
- This distinction is key when dealing with the unredeemed flesh that still lives in us.
- We must remember that it is not our bodies that cause us to sin.
  - We can’t punish our bodies or commit self-harm in order to make sure we no longer sin.
- “Undoubtedly one of the reasons some younger Christians make shipwreck of their faith is because they have never learned how to deal with indwelling sin, or, what is worse, have been encouraged to see it as in irrelevance.” (147)
- **How are we now to put sin to death in our daily living for Christ?**
- It is the daily fight to allow any sinful patterns, thoughts, habits, or actions to have control over us.
- Anything that sets itself against the goodness and knowledge of Christ must never be entertained nor followed in the believer’s life.
- “It is the deliberate rejection of any sinful thought, suggestion, desire, aspiration, deed, circumstance or provocation at the moment we become conscious of its existence. It is the consistent endeavor to do all in our powers to weaken the grip which sin in general, and its manifestations in our won lives in particular, has.” (150)
- It is the heart and mind of the believer to live resolutely towards holiness.
  - This is done by both watching over their hearts for sinfulness and feeding their minds with the Word of God.
- We must not just be looking for sin to kill, but we must also be looking for the beauty of grace. If our minds are so focused on sin, we are going to be caught in the trap of our own sinfulness.
- But if we can see Christ, this motivates us to keep going for Him.
- **2 Corinthians 13:5** “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?”
  - Our true faith will always produce observable evidences in our daily living. Don’t rely on the past experiences to fight sin; sin is present and desires you today.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/my-flesh-was-crucified-so-why-do-i-still-sin>

## A Believer's Strategy Against the "Unholy Trinity"

- Think of the world like the bait. As you look around, there are thousands upon thousands of things in the world which can have a "drawing" effect upon you.
- Then think of the flesh as the "hook". People are created to have needs and even good wants. People need money, food, a house, etc. to survive.
- Finally, the devil is the "fisherman" who then manipulates desires through deception to bring us into a place where sin no longer feels or even looks like sin but just a normal part of the Christian life.

### The Partnership of the Enemies<sup>12</sup>

Enemy	Role in the Table	How it Operates
The Devil	The Agent	The strategist who crafts the specific lie (e.g., "You won't die").
The World	The Environment	The "storefront" displaying the food, the beauty, and the power.
The Flesh	The Target	The internal "propensity" that wants to say "Yes" to the display.

- Believers must know where the influence is leading them.
- If you are putting yourself in a place (the environment) where you know that you are more susceptible to sin, then you have already brought one of the three partners into your life.
- If you start to "reason" with yourself that what you need is greater than following and loving Christ, the flesh already has a headstart in your race for holiness, and the devil has a foothold.
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## **ROMANS 7:14-24 AND THE NEW LIFE**

**Romans 7:14-25** "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. {15} For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. {16} But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. {17} So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. {18} For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. {19} For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. {20} But if I am doing the

<sup>12</sup> John MacArthur, *Anatomy of Temptation* taken from 1 John 2:15-17 and Matthew 4:11, sermon 2182.

very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. {21} I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. {22} For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, {23} but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. {24} Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? {25} Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

- **Romans 7** has held a long-standing debate among believers as to whether Paul is describing his pre-Christian life and how he related to the law...or his normal Christian experience after being born again.
- While there are good people who believe both sides of the debate, I do believe it is vital to understand that Paul is describing his life *after* he was born again.
  - In other words, Paul is writing to the church at Rome and describing his own life as a believer as he fights temptation, sin, what it looks like to fall into sin, and how to have victory over sin.

## **EXCURSES: THE BELIEVER AND THE LAW**

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