



## Daily Verse and Comment

### Romans 7:24

(24) O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

*King James Version*

*The Amplified Bible* renders Paul's question as, "Who will release and deliver me from [the *shackles* of] this body of death?" Certain ancient Roman authorities were infamous for their sadistic manner, particularly when dealing with criminals. Most people are familiar with the gruesome and inhumane practice of crucifixion, but many consider another method of punishment even more shocking and appalling—one meted out by Roman tyrants most frequently upon murderers: They shackled the convicted killer to the dead body of his victim.

We gain some insight into this heinous practice from the poet Virgil, who described it in his *The Aeneid*, *Book 8*, starting on line 485:

The living and the dead at his command  
Were coupled, face to face, and hand to hand,  
Till, chok'd with stench, in loath'd embraces tied,  
The ling'ring wretches pin'd away and died.

Shackled to his victim, eye-to-eye, hand-to-hand, waist-to-waist, and foot-to-foot, the murderer—still very much alive—was forced to live out the remainder of his life directly bearing the weight and the putrefying stench of the dead body. In time, of course, the rotting flesh of the corpse would become rife with disease, infecting the killer and leading to a most horrible and grisly end.

Such vile disciplinary measures typically became well known in the Roman provinces by design, all the better to keep a foreign populace in check. As

not only a Roman citizen from a prominent family but also classically educated, the apostle Paul was likely aware of this, as well as most other Roman laws, customs, practices, and traditions. Indeed, he wrote several of his epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) while incarcerated by the same government. He had faced Roman punishment on several occasions (see, for instance, [II Corinthians 11:23-28](#)).

It may very well be that Paul recognized the value of the metaphor this deplorable punishment depicted: a man being shackled to and destroyed by the cumbersome weight and the horrific nature of his sins. Such a metaphor is an effective tool, warning us never to underestimate the power, the weight, the gravity, and the sordid nature of [sin](#) that [Satan](#) will use against us ( [Genesis 3:13](#); [I Corinthians 7:5](#); [II Corinthians 2:11](#); [I Peter 5:8](#)).

Consider also that we are surrounded by and constantly in touch with sin throughout our physical lives ([Genesis 19:4](#); [Isaiah 1:4-6](#); [Jeremiah 17:9](#); [Romans 3:10-18](#)). Just as the dead body eventually infects and destroys the healthy body to which it is attached, so also does sin infect each of us if not overcome. Death is not immediate but instead slow and painful. Direct punishment from [God](#) is not typically swift either ([Ecclesiastes 8:11](#)), but an unrepentant life of sin slowly poisons us, separating us from God, our only dependable protection ([Isaiah 59:2](#)).

Most, if not all, Christians lack the understanding of the depth of hatred God has for sin. In [Isaiah 55:8](#), God tells us that His ways and thoughts are not at all like ours, and then He declares in verse 9, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

— Ted E. Bowling

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[\*\*This Body of Death\*\*](#)

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