

FREE AT LAST

"NO CURFEW"

ROMANS 7:1-6

When viewed from the perspective of "perfecting holiness" (2Co 7:1), the process we go through to become like Jesus (Ro 8:29) is called "sanctification." Assuming we want to be more like Jesus, what must we do to be sanctified? Keep the law? Paul makes it clear that keeping the law is *not* the answer. He tells Christians in the church at Rome, "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" (7:6). In a nutshell, he tells them that we are not obligated to keep the law of Moses. Obeying it is not a means to sanctification. Instead, we are to keep the law of Christ through the influence and power of the indwelling Spirit. "Just as the Mosaic law was normative for the Jew, the law of Christ is binding for the Christian. This law of Christ is discussed both by Paul (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21) and by James (James 1:25; 2:8, 12). It is no mere rephrasing of the Mosaic law, for it consists not of a concrete corpus of demands, but rather of basic principles, for each believer is promised permanent indwelling by the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit ministers in the life of the New Testament believer on behalf of Jesus Christ, there is no need for any lengthy, detailed, codified, external means of restraint as in the Mosaic law" (Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, Counterpoints, Stanley N. Gundry ed., 277).

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

– Romans 8:14

Under grace, the Spirit supplies from *within* the control and direction that was once imperfectly provided from *without*, under law. Paul tells his readers that what the law itself was powerless to do God did through his Son. "He condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in those, who live "according to the Spirit" (Ro 8:4, NIV 1984). One writer explains: "Although the Holy Spirit set the believer free at the time of regeneration, the believer does not always experience that freedom. When he uses self-effort against the power of the sinful disposition [lit., "flesh"] (such as when he relies upon the old covenant law as the means of sanctification), he experiences domination by sin. Only when he appropriates the controlling power of the Holy Spirit, as a result of relying upon God's grace as the means of sanctification, does he experience the freedom that is his" (Renald E. Showers, *The New Nature*, 112).

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The first thing you, as a reader, must pay attention to, if you want to understand what you're reading, is the words on your page. If you run across words you don't understand and simply plow on without stopping to define them, or at least note them so you can define them later, your comprehension of what you're reading will be diminished. Do that a few times and when you're finished reading, you won't understand a thing you've read! Reading the Bible is no different. Take

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reading Paul's letters, for example. The apostle uses theological terms like "justify" and "redemption," to mention just two. If you don't know what they mean, you can't possibly understand what Paul means when he writes: "being *justified* as a gift by His grace through the *redemption* which is in Christ Jesus" (Ro 3:24, NASB). To complicate things, he also gives his own distinctive meanings to common terms, two of which are found in Romans 6 and 7: "old self" (lit., "old man") and "flesh." Again, if you don't know what they mean, you can't possibly understand what Paul means when he writes: "knowing this, that our *old self* was crucified with Him (6:6), and "while we were in the *flesh*, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death" (7:5).

The following definitions are offered for "old self" (lit., "old man") and "flesh." The first refers to *the you* you were before you became a Christian in *contrast* to *the you* you are now that you're saved. According to Paul, your "old self" was crucified with Christ. One theologian explains: "The unsaved person dies with Christ in the sense that he ceases to be an unregenerate man. Before regeneration he was an 'old man,' an unregenerate man. However, at the moment of the new birth he ceases to be an 'old man' . . . The use of the terms 'old man' and 'new man' (Colossians 3:9-10) to describe the individual in his unregenerate and regenerate states shows that the individual is regarded as one person *spiritually* in his unregenerate state but as another person *spiritually* in his regenerate state" (Showers, 68).

The second, "flesh," refers to "human nature as controlled and directed by sin" (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 245). The unsaved person is a slave to sin (Ro 6:20); sin *personified* is the unsaved person's "master," who uses his slave's own nature to dominate him. The term *nature* in this context refers to an "inherent disposition" that affects a person's conduct and character. Before the fall, Adam possessed a nature or disposition that was favorably oriented toward God, but after the fall, Adam lost that favorable disposition and became thoroughly confirmed in a disposition of enmity against God. "Flesh," then, is a term Paul often uses to refer to unsaved person's "old nature," "human nature as controlled and directed by sin," "sin nature," or "sinful disposition." When a person believes, that person dies to sin, which up to then had exerted its control over him through "the flesh," and is freed from its control. But neither "sin" nor "the flesh" is said to die. No longer slaves to sin and the flesh, believers can still sin, so they must not offer themselves "as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness" but "as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness" (Ro 6:19).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 7:1-6

1 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, 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.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "law" throughout.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 2, 3, 6.
- * Underline "that law" in v. 3.
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 4.
- * Circle "died" in v. 4.
- * Bracket "body of Christ" in v. 4.
- * Box "that" and "in order that" indicating *purpose* in v. 4.
- * Highlight "in the realm of the flesh" in v. 5.
- * Box "so that" indicating *result* in vv. 5, 6.
- * Bracket "released from the law" in v. 6.
- * Underline "new way of the Spirit" and "old way of the written code" in v. 6.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. If the church in Rome was comprised mostly of Gentiles (1:5-6), explain how they would "know the law" (v. 1).
2. What does Paul set out to prove by his *example* introduced in verse 2?
3. Explain the *two* complementary *contrasts* in verses 2 and 3.
4. Identify *who* is said to die in Paul's *example* (vv. 2-3) and *who* is said to die in his *application* of the example (v. 4). Explain why the example and application are *not* parallel.
5. Put what "died to the law" means in your own words (cf., "died to sin," 6:2).
6. Clarify *when*, *how*, and *why* we "died to the law" (v. 4).
7. When were we "in the realm of the flesh" (cf., "controlled by the sinful nature," NIV 1984)?
8. Explain why the law *ironically* "bore fruit for death" (v. 5) rather than "fruit to God" (v. 4).
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the difference between living for God in the new way versus serving in the old way.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The main topic of Romans 7 is the law. In it Paul makes two points: 1) "the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives" (v. 1); and 2) believers "died to the law through the body of Christ" (v. 4). From these two facts, the apostle reasons that believers "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" (v. 6). A number of parallels link chapter 7 to chapter 6. One commentator observes: "7:1-6 repeats with respect to the law many of the same points that were made in Rom. 6 with respect to sin. As in chap. 6 the believer has 'died to sin' (v. 2), and thus been 'freed from it' (vv. 18, 22) so that it no longer 'rules' (v. 14a), so in 7:1-6 the believer has been 'put to death to the law' (v. 4) and thus been 'freed from it' (v. 6) so that it no longer 'rules' (v. 1). And as in chap. 6 this freedom from sin also means 'serving' righteousness, or God, so that 'fruit' pleasing to God may be produced (vv. 18-22), so in 7:1-6 freedom from the law means being joined to Christ in a new 'service' so that 'fruit' pleasing to God may be forthcoming (vv. 4-6) . . . it is clear that 7:1-6 continues the stress of 6:15-23 on the necessary implications of the believer's transfer into the new realm of grace" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 409-10)—for Christians are not under the law but are under grace (6:14-15).

In verses 2-3, Paul illustrates his first point using two *contrasts*. A Jewish woman is bound to her husband by the law as long as her husband lives *but* as soon as he dies, she is released from the stipulation in the law that binds her. What's more, if she has sexual relations with another man as long as her husband lives, she is an adulteress, *but* as soon as he dies, she is released from the stipulation in the law that binds her and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

Assuming the illustration and application are parallel, some have argued that the "married woman" represents the believer, the "first husband" represents the law, and the second "husband" represents Christ. But the illustration and application are not parallel, suggesting the illustration is not an allegory. In the application believers (i.e., the married woman) die to the law; the law (i.e., the first husband) doesn't die. That

being the case, Paul probably doesn't intend his readers to find significance in the details of the illustration. It simply illustrates his point to the effect that death severs the believer's obligation to obey the law.

In verses 4-6, Paul applies the point of his illustration. Jesus was "born under the law" (Gal. 4:4) and lived his earthly life under the law's authority (Mt 5:17), but when he died, he was released from the law. Three days later, he was resurrected to live his new life free from the law. Through their union with Christ in his death, believers died to the law in the same way they died to sin (6:2), and now they live their new lives free from the law. They died when Christ died that their obligation might be to him rather than the law, so they might bear fruit to God. Ironically, their obligation to the law prior to salvation had unintended consequences. When they were "in the flesh" (cf., "in the realm of the flesh," NIV 2011; "controlled by the sinful nature," NIV 1984), the law aroused their sinful passions. For instance, the command, "Do not covet," produced in them all sorts of covetous desires, so paradoxically, "The very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death" (7:10). As one writer says: "Instead of enabling its subject to live righteously, it actually hindered them through its effect upon the sinful disposition" (Showers, 87).

But after dying to sin and dying to the law, believers have been released from any obligation to the law so that they can "serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (v. 6). Clearly, being led by the Spirit is the alternative to being under the law according to Paul, who tells the Galatians: "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (5:16-18).

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Believers, who have died to the law, have been released from any obligation to obey it, so they may live in the new way of the Spirit rather than the old way of the written code.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

Describe the role the law has played in your life as a Christian.

How well does the role it has played fit the message of the passage?

Describe what living for God in "the way of the Spirit" looks like.

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **the law** Because the Greek text does not contain the definite article, some argue that Paul may have secular law in mind, but this is not necessarily so since the term without the article can refer to the law of Moses (cf., 5:20), and because the illustration that follows is grounded in Jewish law. Paul's readers would be familiar with Jewish law since in all likelihood "the bulk of the gentile converts had previously been adherents to the Jewish synagogues in Rome or elsewhere (God-worshippers) . . . In Jewish law the wife was indeed bound to the husband so long as he lived since only he had the right to divorce in accordance with Deut. 24:1 . . . In Roman law marriage could be brought to an end by the free will of either partner" (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol.38a, *Romans 1-8*, 359, 60). "In Roman law of Paul's day a wife was not irrevocably bound to her husband for a lifetime. It appears that Paul is drawing on a Mosaic principle here that was accepted as valid in the Christian community, and Paul presumes it is valid in the Roman Christian community" (Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 175).

v. 4 **died to the law** Through their union with Christ in his death (6:5), believers "died to sin" (6:2), i.e., their death to sin set them free from its authority over them. Put differently, sin was no longer their master; they were no longer its slaves. Likewise, believers "died to the law" (7:4), i.e., their death to the law set them free from its authority over them.

v. 4 **body of Christ** "This is a reference to the personal body of the Savior in his crucifixion. Through the same means believers became dead both to the law and to sin. 'The body of Christ' should not be interpreted as a reference to the church, since the word has not been used in the corporate, mystical sense so far in the Epistle, and when it is so used (12:4, 5) Paul brings in the human body as an analogy in order to make his meaning clear, as he had done in an earlier letter (1 Cor 12:12, 13)" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Bible Expositor's Commentary*, 10:77).

v. 5 **in the realm of the flesh** Lit., "in the flesh" (NASB, NET); cf., "living in the flesh" (ESV); "controlled by our old nature" (NLT); "ruled by our sinful selves" (NCV); "controlled by our sinful nature" (NIV(c)1984). "This is the first use of the term 'the flesh' (NASB), in the ethical sense, in Romans. As mentioned previously, it refers to our human nature, which is sinful. The NIV translators interpreted it properly as 'sinful nature' (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 103, www.soniclight.com). "The phrase 'controlled by the sinful nature' [NIV 1984] is an attempt to render 'in the flesh.' Paul has used 'flesh' in several senses thus far: (1) the humanity of Jesus Christ (1:3); (2) the physical body (2:28); (3) mankind—'all flesh' (3:20); and (4) moral, or possibly intellectual, weakness (6:19). Now he adds a fifth: the so-called 'ethical' meaning of flesh, which is the most common use of the word in his writings and denotes the old sinful nature. It is the sense of the word that pervades chapters 7 and 8, together with a final use in 13:14" (Harrison, 77). "'Flesh' in this ethically depreciatory sense means 'human nature as controlled and directed by sin . . . When Paul speaks of having been 'in the flesh' he is referring to that period when sin exercised the dominion and is equivalent to saying 'when we were in sin'" (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 245). "Paul means in effect, that the non-Christian is 'enveloped in,' and hence controlled by, narrowly human, this-worldly principles and values" (Moo, 418).

v. 6 **released from the law** "Paul did not say: 'We have been released from the ceremonial part of the Law'-as opposed to the whole. The Mosaic Law was a unified code that contained moral, religious, and civil regulations that regulated the life of the Israelites (Exod. 20-Num. 10). God has terminated the whole code as a regulator of Christians' lives (cf. 10:4). Christians have received a new code that Paul called the 'Law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2). It contains some of the same commandments as the old Mosaic Code, including nine of the Ten Commandments. The only one that Jesus did not carry over was the fourth commandment about Sabbath observance. Even though it 'repeats' nine of the Ten Commandments, the Law of Christ is nevertheless a new code. Thus Paul could say that God has 'released' us from 'the Law' of Moses. The Law of Christ consists of the teachings of Jesus Christ that He communicated during His earthly ministry that are in the New Testament. It also consists of teachings that He gave through His apostles and prophets following His ascension to heaven. This is one of several passages that reveal that, as Christians, we have no obligation to keep the Law of Moses (cf. 10:4; 14:17; Mark 7:18-19; John 1:17; Acts 10:10-15; 1 Cor. 8:8; 2 Cor. 3:7-11; Heb. 7:12; 9:10; Gal. 3:24; 4:9-11; 5:1)" (Constable, 104-105).

v. 7 **spirit vs written code** Cf., "Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit" (NLT). The contrast is neither between the letter and the spirit of the law, nor its literal sense and its spiritual sense, but between the Old Covenant and the New, the old age and the new, namely serving God through obedience to the Spirit versus obedience to the law (Moo, 421).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

On occasion I have thrown some seeds in my backyard and about half the time the plant I intended to grow will bloom. My sister, on the other hand, is an intentional gardener. She tends her soil, weeds her garden, fertilizes and waters her young seedlings. Her harvest is always amazing. My mouth is watering just thinking about her tomatoes. She is invested in the process of growing great fruits and vegetables. One of the titles she can call herself is gardener. Those of us who have trusted Christ as Savior are called to bear fruit in accordance with our new title, believers. However, we must be intentional. Our lives will reflect that we belong to God when we live as people who are released from bondage to sin and the law. How can you help your kids learn to be fruit bearers? Teach them to abide in Christ (John 15:4-5). We do that by staying connected to God in prayer. We take time to read and know His Word. We allow the Holy Spirit to convict and guide us. We stay accountable to a group of like-minded Christ-followers. If we teach our kids to do these things consistently and intentionally, they will bear fruit. Praise the Lord our salvation is free and instantaneous. Developing Christ-like character requires sensitivity to the Spirit's work in us and intentionality on our behalf. Let's be deliberate in our spiritual gardening.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 7:1-6

1. What did we die to? Who do we live for?
2. What happened when we were controlled by our sinful nature?
3. What can we do when we belong to Christ?

What Do You Think

What do you think verse 6 means, in your own words?

What R U Going To Do

Read Galatians 5:22-23. List the fruit of the Spirit. Which ones are obvious in your life? Which ones do you need to pray that God will help you develop?

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:1-2 – *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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