

Old and New

I remember as if it were yesterday, my freedom in Christ,” shared Larah. “It’s not that everyone has to be expressive in worship. But I was able to be. You see, I came from a strict background, and my father was very harsh.”

Larah had stayed after service in the church coffee shop with Nina, who had joined the church several months before. The two had been discussing a common acquaintance, and the conversation had spilled over into the coffee shop.

Nina was telling Larah how much more “alive” she felt since accepting the Lord. “It’s been incredible. Really! I can’t believe how differently I feel now! What was it like for you?”

“I remember what it felt like being in sin and the dead end that comes with that lifestyle. I felt hopeless, lost and unloved,” Larah said. “My father imposed religion onto our family. We had a lot of rules to obey. That was what it meant to follow Jesus, he said. It was brutal. He was brutal. There was no love. No light. No grace. It was all just for show.”

“But when I found Christ at this church, that made all the difference,” added Larah.

“Yes,” beamed Nina. “So, when is the last time you talked to Patrice?”

“When she told me about the church,” replied Larah. “She’s due back in town at the end of the year. We should all go to dinner.”

“Yes,” Nina said. “That would be wonderful.”

- 1.** *What kinds of things rob us of fully living our life?*
- 2.** *How does the law of sin take life out of us?*
- 3.** *How can we be free from the entanglement of sin?*

Alive in Christ

Romans 7:1-6, KJV

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of

Romans 7:1-6, NIV

¹Do 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? ²For 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. ³So 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.

⁴So, 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. ⁵For 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.

⁶But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of

spirit, and not in the oldness
of the letter.

the Spirit, and not in the old
way of the written code.

Paul continued the case he had begun in chapters 5—6: believers in Christ are dead to sin, have new life through Him, and because they are “dead” are no longer under the “authority” of the law (Rom. 7:1). Once more, Paul specifically addressed the Jewish part of his audience who “know the law” and engaged their knowledge of the law to help them better understand the life-changing power of Christ.

He employed an analogy based on the law in relation to marriage: “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” (vs. 2). While her husband was alive, “sexual relations with another man” would have made her an adulteress; but once her husband died there was no sin in remarrying (vs. 3). Paul used this illustration to help his audience understand their own death and “remarriage” to Christ: “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” (vs. 4).

At the end of verse 4, Paul shifted from deliverance from sin itself to the purpose of that deliverance: “in order that we might bear fruit for God.” Believers were no longer to just live for themselves but to live for Christ. Previously, sin had prevented them from living this kind of life: “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” (vs. 5). But because believers had now died “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” (vs. 6). As Paul would expand upon shortly, the law itself was not sinful, but it aroused and produced awareness of sin. Those who died in Christ had therefore also, before God, died to those “sinful passions” and could now live in the way that Christ had freed them, and the Spirit guided them, to do.

4. *What was Paul's main argument in this passage? Who was he addressing most specifically?*

5. *What analogy did Paul use to make his point?*

6. *How did Paul shift the focus of his message in verses 4b-6?*

Dead through Law and Sin

Romans 7:7-12, KJV

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Romans 7:7-12, NIV

⁷What 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.

After dismissing the power of the law over the lives of believers, Paul addressed a rhetorical question supposedly raised by his listeners: "What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful?" He responded emphatically, "Certainly not!" (vs.

7). However, there was a connection between the law and sin, because the law made clear what sin was. Paul provided one example of this among many: “I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’ ” (vs. 7). It was exactly this knowledge of good and evil that gave sin its power. Thus, “sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting” (vs. 8).

Paul elaborated upon how the connection between the law and sin played out, even in his own life: “apart from the law, sin was dead . . . but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died” (vss. 8-9). To use Paul’s coveting example, he didn’t know he wanted something until he was told he couldn’t have it. But because of this knowledge, “I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death” (vs. 10). It was exactly here, Paul explained, that sin gained its power, as well as its ability to twist the law to serve its own purposes: “For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death” (vs. 11).

Despite the destruction left behind by sin’s twisting of the law, Paul concluded this passage with a resoundingly positive statement: “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good” (vs. 12). This echoed Paul’s words in verse 7: “Is the law sinful? Certainly not!” While the law could be twisted toward sin, it also pointed unflinchingly toward the good and the holy—how God intended every believer to live. The law was good, but only Christ was good enough. Only through His death, and through our “death” in Him, could believers be delivered from the power of the law and the power of sin.

7. *What was the connection between the law and sin? How did Paul illustrate this connection?*

8. *How did sin twist the law to fulfill its own purposes, according to Paul?*

9. *How did Paul conclude his argument?*

Follow the Spirit's Leading

Paul encouraged his readers to die to what once bound them, the law, in order to live in the new way of the Spirit. The law showed us what to do and not do, which we responded to by doing exactly what the law told us not to do. It's like the child who is told not to be mean to a younger sibling and then proceeds to do that very thing. Or when we read Jesus' words to refrain from judging others and before we know it, we are questioning and criticizing a family member's actions.

Sin entered the world when the first man and woman were offered forbidden fruit. The knowledge of good and evil enticed them, leading to sin and death. Our sinful desires may include possessions that become idols, selfish attitudes, and words that destroy rather than encourage.

Even though the law shows us what sin is, as well as what is good and holy, it cannot bring us eternal life. Only through belief and trust in Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection can we be delivered from the power of sin and receive His Spirit. The Spirit leads us to a better life that produces good fruit, not forbidden fruit.

Rules and commandments guide us in God's ways, but do not bring us life. How can we experience the Spirit's leading in what we do? To walk with the Spirit is to depend on Him to help us avoid the temptation to become entangled again in sinful behaviors. Instead of being bound by the law, we choose to allow God's Spirit to write His law on our hearts (Jer. 31:33). In this we experience freedom from sin and death.

10. *In what ways can the law hinder our new life in the Spirit?*

11. *How can knowledge of the law benefit us?*

12. *How does the Spirit lead us in our new life in Christ?*

13. *In what area of your life would you like to experience the Spirit's leading?*

Life in the Spirit

Paul encouraged his readers to die to the law and live in the new way of the Spirit so they might bear much fruit for God. He reminded them that even though the law makes us more aware of sin, it also shows us what is good and holy and how God wants us to live.

► *Write a song or poem of praise to God. Reflect on these questions for ideas: How has God blessed you with new life in the Spirit? How has being set free from sin enabled you to bear fruit for God?*

KEY VERSE

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. —Romans 7:6, KJV

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. —Romans 7:6, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of October 9 through October 15

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 31:1-5, 19-24—The Lord Preserves the Faithful.
- Tue.** Mark 10:46-52—Your Faith Has Made You Well.
- Wed.** Psalm 28—My Heart Trusts in God.
- Thu.** Acts 15:22-35—The Gospel Sets Us Free.
- Fri.** Micah 6:1-8—Justice, Kindness, and Humility.
- Sat.** Galatians 2:1-10—The Gospel for All People.
- Sun.** Galatians 2:11-21—We Are Justified in Christ.