

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME VII // CASE FOR THE STRUGGLE
APRIL 24, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: For what purposes would you say God saved those of us who believe in Him?

Key Text: “Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?² For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.” (Romans 7:1-6)

In his excellent book *What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?* the late D. James Kennedy tells about a man named Mel Trotter. Trotter was the perfect example of what some would call a no-good loser. He abused his family, he neglected his children, he was fired from jobs, and he was a drunkard in the gutter who would do anything for a drink. One day Trotter came home and found his little daughter seriously ill. Trotter took her shoes off her feet and went out and sold them for a drink! When he returned, he found out that his little girl was dead. He was so overwhelmed with remorse, he decided to kill himself. As he was making his way through a rough part of downtown Chicago to throw himself into Lake Michigan, he heard someone preaching over a loudspeaker about Jesus Christ who loved sinners. Mel was transfixed by the message—he turned to Christ and he experienced forgiveness and freedom from the chains of his past. Trotter later established fifty inner-city missions in which thousands of people found new life in Christ! Mel was set free from sin for the purpose of glorifying God and bearing fruit for Him.

In Romans 7, Paul reminds us that when we receive Christ, our relationship with the Law is changed—we’ve been set free *from* the Law *for* a new life in Christ!

1. At salvation, our relationship to Moses’ Law changes (7:1-4a).

We learned in Romans 6 that salvation involves a kind of spiritual death and resurrection in which we turn from sin and instead choose to be alive in Christ. To illustrate this, in 7:1-4, Paul refers to the “*law of marriage*” (v.2) that binds a husband and wife together. Just as a married woman is released from the law of marriage if her husband dies, and she is free to marry a new husband, at salvation we died to Moses’ law and thus were freed from obligation to it (since the Law only remains in effect for the living). Now we are free to belong to someone else: Jesus Christ!

Discuss: How would you describe to a new Christian what we have been set free *from*? How would you describe to a new Christian what we have been set free *for*?

Discuss: How does being set free from sin so as to live for Christ look in daily life?

2. We've been set free from sin in order to bear fruit for God (7:4b-5).

Now that our new identity is in Christ, we exist "*in order that we may bear fruit for God*" (v.4b). Our death to law and resurrection to Christ has created for us a new purpose. Our lives contribute to God's harvest of useful "fruit."

Slavery to sin is "*living in the flesh.*" The "flesh" refers to our limited and sin-controlled bodies. The "fruit" or outcome of sin-controlled living under the law is always death. This is true both in the sense of physical death—separation of spirit from body—and spiritual death—separation of spirit from God, as explained in our lesson on Romans 6:23.

Discuss: Why is death a good description of both current life and eternal life that's lived apart from God?

3. We no longer obey our sin nature; now, we live in the Spirit's power (7:6).

The difference between living "*in the flesh*" (v.5) under the law and living in "*the new way of the Spirit*" (v.6) as a believer in Jesus is the difference between death and life.

Christians have been released from the law by our death to sin. Paul has described our faith in Christ's death for our sin as causing us to be so closely identified with Him that we died, in a spiritual sense, as well! It is that death that has freed us from sin and from our responsibility to the law (Romans 6:2, 18).

Serving "*in the new way of the Spirit*" (v.6) means we serve through the power of the Holy Spirit within us, a power we did not have access to before salvation. Now we serve the living God, not the written code of the law and all its rules and regulations. Our freedom is not an aimless freedom to be lived for selfish desires and pursuits, but a freedom to bear fruit that will bring glory to God.

Discuss: How would you explain to a new believer that freedom in Christ does not mean doing whatever you want to do, but now being able to do whatever God wants you to do?

Discuss: Look up these Scripture verses and discuss the different kinds of fruit God wants us to bear: Galatians 5:22-23; Romans 1:13; 6:22; 15:28; Hebrews 13:15; Philippians 1:22

For Further Study:

"What is the Conflict of Flesh vs. Spirit?" article at www.gotquestions.org

List of Scripture References on Freedom in Christ at www.openbible.info

"What is the Power of the Holy Spirit?" at www.gotquestions.org