

SESSION 6

Struggle

ROMANS 7:4-6, 14-25

BECAUSE SIN REMAINS A POWERFUL FORCE, BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT
BE SURPRISED WHEN DOING RIGHT IS A STRUGGLE.



Everyone loves a good rescue story. Some rescue stories are dramatic, like the firefighter who pulls an elderly couple out of a bedroom window just before their house collapses in flames. Others are less dramatic but no less inspiring, like the teacher who stays after school to tutor students who are struggling in class. However, nothing compares to the way God rescued us through Jesus.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE “RESCUE” STORY? WHO COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU ARE ASKED TO NAME THE FIRST PERSON WHO EVER RESCUED YOU?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul returned to the question of whether Christians should continue to sin because they are under grace rather than the law (Rom. 6:15). Did grace give license to sin? Again, Paul strongly objected, “Absolutely not!” (see also 6:1-2).

The apostle used two illustrations to show the power of grace to battle sin rather than submit to it. First, he explained that everyone is a servant—either to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness. Believers, freed from sin through Christ, now serve God, resulting in holiness and eternal life. Paul concluded that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus” (6:16-23).

Second, Paul used an illustration from marriage to show that believers are released from the law’s authority through Christ’s death. Just as death ends a marriage covenant, Christ’s death frees us from the law so we can belong to Him and bear fruit for God (7:1-6).

Paul clarified that the law itself is not sinful; rather, it reveals sin. The law exposes human inability to keep it perfectly, and sin uses the law to produce death in us. The law shows our need for grace (7:7-13).

However, just because believers are set free from sin’s power and are dead to sin, it doesn’t mean that they no longer struggle with sin. In Romans 7:14-25, Paul described the inner struggle of desiring to do good but being pulled by sin. This tension shows human weakness and dependence on Christ. Paul ended with gratitude: deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is our Rescuer.



4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may **belong to another**. **A** You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may **bear fruit** **B** for God. **5** For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death. **6** But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in **the newness of the Spirit** **C** and not in the old letter of the law. [. . .] **14** For we know that the law is **spiritual**, **D** but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave under sin. **15** For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but **I do what I hate**. **E** **16** Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. **17** So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. **18** For I know that **nothing good lives in me**, **F** that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. **19** For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. **20** Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me. **21** So I discover this law: When I want to do what is good, evil is present with me. **22** For in my inner self I delight in God's law, **23** but I see a different law in the parts of my body, **waging war** **G** against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. **24** What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? **25 Thanks be to God** **H** through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin.

A. Through Christ's death, believers are no longer bound to the law. Instead, they belong to Jesus, serving Him as Master and Lord.

B. Jesus emphasized the importance of bearing fruit as a sign of one's true relationship with Him (see John 15:1-7).

C. The transformed life empowered by God's Spirit, in contrast to the futile efforts of trying to obey the "old letter of the law."

D. Rather than diminishing the Mosaic law, Paul affirmed that it had served a proper purpose in salvation history.

E. Despite dying to sin, believers still struggle with an internal tug-of-war between sinful desires and devotion to God. In some cases, they fall into the very sins they want to reject.

F. Paul admitted that he had no power on his own to effect spiritual transformation in his life. He wanted to do right, but had no ability to follow through on his good intentions. He expounded on this dilemma in verses 19-21.

G. Believers wrestle with an inner conflict between our redeemed minds and the sinful tendencies still present in our bodies.

H. Despite his personal limitations, Paul praised God for providing Jesus as the answer to his spiritual struggles.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Freed

(Rom. 7:4-6)

Believers bear fruit for God when they live in the Spirit of God.

- **What did Paul say about the law in these verses?**
- **What practical difference should it make that a believer belongs to Christ? In what ways does it change your identity and purpose?**

2. Conflicted

(Rom. 7:14-23)

Believers need to recognize that the struggle with sin is real, and they need help.

- **How does recognizing sin's presence in you change the way you depend on God?**

3. Hope

(Rom. 7:24-25)

Believers can express gratitude to God that they do not have to battle sin in their own power, but that Christ provides the victory.

- **In light of the difficulty in battling sin, what keeps us from despair and hopelessness?**
- **In what ways can you live more consciously in the freedom Christ provides?**

Apply the Text

Discuss with others in the Bible study group a believer's conflict over sin.

- **What approach do they take in dealing with it? How does the conflict make them more productive and grateful believers?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Sanctification

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. (See Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Summarize the argument.

Read through the entirety of Romans 6:15-7:25 to summarize the argument Paul made regarding the ongoing effects of sin. First, make an outline of the argument. Second, write a one-sentence summary of this argument. Consider how sin effects a believer's life and the significance of dying to sin. Respond to these questions: How does this argument encourage you? Does it discourage you in any way?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 7:4. What relationships do you have that shape the way you live or make decisions?

In the previous chapter, Paul explained that believers have died to sin (Rom. 6:2). Because we have died to sin, our lives bear the fruit of sanctification (6:22). Chapter 7 deals with similar themes. Paul explained that we have died to the law and now belong to Christ. The new life we have in the Spirit results in the fruit of a righteous life (7:4).

Why is it significant that Paul says believers “belong to another” (Christ), rather than simply saying they follow new rules?

Since believers have died to the law, obedience to God is no longer driven by external rules but by a relationship with Christ. When we attempt to live the Christian life through self effort or rule keeping alone, frustration will follow. But belonging to Christ changes everything. Our lives are shaped by His presence, and obedience becomes the result of walking in step with the Spirit. Romans 7:4 calls us to stop measuring faithfulness merely by compliance and instead evaluate whether our lives are producing spiritual fruit that reflects our relationship with Jesus.

Discuss the practical steps you can take to live more intentionally out of your relationship with Christ rather than out of obligation.

Memorize Romans 7:4, considering how your life reflects your union with Jesus.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 7:4-6

Highlight the phrase “you belong to him” (v. 4).

Paul wanted believers to know they now belonged to Christ. Because of Jesus’s death, we have died to the law with Him. Likewise, because He rose from the dead, so do we when we place our faith in Him. Paul looked back to the time when we lived “in the flesh.” Instead of living to please God, we lived under the control of sinful passions. When we gave in to those passions, we sinned against God. As sin aroused our passions, we sinned even more. Our passions kept on working in us like seeds planted in the soil. The seeds became sprouts that kept on growing stronger. Eventually, the sprouts became plants that produced “fruit for death.” In other words, the law, which meant to show us the righteous commandments of God, instead became an instrument that led to sin. The law provoked our old nature to sin, which led to death.

But we have been “released from the law” and “have died to what held us.” The law held us captive because we could not meet its demands. The old letter of the law told us what to do but did not create true spirituality. What we needed was to serve in the “newness of the Spirit.” The law told us how to live, but we were unable to live that way. In Christ, we have both the desire to obey and the power for obedience.

What practical difference does it make that you belong to Christ?



Day 2: Romans 7:14-17

Compare these verses to Galatians 5:17.

In verses 7-13, Paul explained that the law itself is not sinful; rather, it reveals sin. Without the law, we would not recognize sin. In verses 14-16, Paul explained that the problem was not with the law but with human nature—“the flesh.” As evidence, he pointed to the ongoing battle with sin in his own life. At times he did what he knew to be wrong and failed to do what he knew to be right. Paul was giving his own testimony regarding the conflict with sin that continued to trouble him.

As Paul testified about his struggle, he acknowledged the truth about the law. He confessed that when he gave himself to sinful behavior, he did not want to do it at all. The spiritual conviction that tore at his heart because of his sinful behavior validated the purpose of the law. Paul noted that the law cast a bright light on sin. For that reason, he saw the law as altogether good.

As believers, we still battle the power of sin even though Jesus has set us free from it. This ongoing battle will not be settled until Jesus returns (1 John 3:2).

Where do you recognize in you the same conflict Paul described?

How can recognizing this ongoing conflict lead you to greater dependence on God?



Day 3: Romans 7:18-23

Consider the extent to which you can echo Paul's words, "I delight in God's law."

Paul had "the desire to do what is good." This desire comes from the Holy Spirit. However, there was no "ability" to do good. He struggled to "do the good" he wanted to do, doing instead "the evil" he did "not want to do." Paul was acknowledging that sin is still a formidable enemy, even after salvation. Death to sin does not remove its allure. Rather, it creates an uncomfortable tension in a believer's life.

Paul experienced sheer delight at the thought of devoting himself to honoring God's law with his life. But much to his disappointment, he observed that a "different law" had an extremely powerful influence over the various parts of his body. This new law constantly is "waging war" against God's way and works to make a believer a "prisoner to the law of sin." Though sin may not rule over believers any longer, we still can yield the "parts of our body" to evil, including our minds, hands, mouths, ears, and eyes—just to name a few. The opposing laws waged war with each other, and Paul's life became the battlefield.

How does recognizing sin's presence in you change the way you depend on God?



Day 4: Romans 7:24

Reflect on how much you long to be delivered from the power of sin.

Like Paul, we agonize over our inner conflict. We're conflicted in that we don't do what we want to do, and we do what we don't want to do in our relationship with God. The frustration over the endless battle within ourselves because of the inner conflict compels us to echo his one-word description of himself: "wretched." The word suits us well because it underscores the misery we feel in our hearts because we're disgusted with ourselves. But at the same time, we can't seem to do anything about changing our behavior because we simply lack the personal strength to do it.

For that reason, we join Paul in determining that we need help. As we consider his assessment of the help we need, we affirm that we need more than good advice from a person who understands our conflict. Good advice alone will not solve our problem. Like Paul, we need someone to rescue us from our struggle. Paul's statement about "this body of death" hits home with us. We have died to the reign of sin over us. However, we're frustrated with the way sin's corpse keeps hanging on to us. Sin still wants to control our lives and prevent us from experiencing spiritual joy in our walk with God. We long to be rescued.

What does Paul's question about who will rescue him reveal about where deliverance comes from—and where it does not come from?



Day 5: Romans 7:25

Consider what Paul expressed gratitude for.

Paul concluded this section with gratitude to God. We can express our thanks to Him because He sent Christ Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sin. When we turn to Him by faith, we experience God's grace. We thank Him wholeheartedly for His grace in setting us free from the tyranny of sin. Now Christ Jesus reigns supremely as our Lord. For that reason, our hope centers in Him alone. Because of our hope in Him, we rejoice in the certainty that He hears our cry for help by rescuing us.

We know from experience that some conflicts can be resolved. In those cases, the intense struggle between two opposing forces, ideas, or people can be replaced with peace. However, some conflicts in our lives will never be resolved. Instead, they can be managed, but the struggle involving them will never end. In those cases, life will go on, and the conflict will continue to be a part of it. Like Paul, we trust Christ to help us as we manage the inner conflict with sin. Our minds will continue to serve “the law of God.” However, our flesh will keep on nudging us to obey “the law of sin.”

Give thanks to God for delivering you through Christ, even though the struggle continues. Pray that you would rely on His grace rather trying to overcome sin by your own efforts.

APPLY THE TEXT

When did you recognize that sin would always present a problem for you? How do you show your gratitude to God for helping you to be victorious through Christ?

JOURNAL

