

Struggle

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

Romans 7:4-6,14-25

4 Therefore, my **brothers and sisters**, **A** you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may **belong to another**. **B** You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may **bear fruit** **C** for God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful **passions** **D** 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** **E** and not in the old letter of the law. [. . .] 14 For we know that the law is **spiritual**, **F** 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**. **G** 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**, **H** 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** **I** 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** **J** I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 **Thanks be to God** **K** 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.

Exploring Key Words

- A** While Paul had never visited the Roman church, he emphasized their shared relationship as children of God and spiritual siblings.
- B** Through Christ's death, believers are no longer bound to the law. Instead, they belong to Jesus, serving Him as Master and Lord.
- C** Jesus emphasized the importance of bearing fruit as a sign of one's true relationship with Him (see John 15:1-7).
- D** Likely from the Greek word *pathos*, it relates to strong emotion. In Scripture, it often refers to a negative experience, like suffering or affliction.
- E** The transformed life empowered by God's Spirit, in contrast to the futile efforts of trying to obey the "old letter of the law."
- F** Rather than diminishing the Mosaic law, Paul affirmed that it had served a proper purpose in salvation history.
- G** 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.
- H** 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.
- I** Believers wrestle with an inner conflict between our redeemed minds and the sinful tendencies still present in our bodies.
- J** A raw cry of frustration from the apostle. The wording suggests a person trapped in misery and the frustration of moral bankruptcy.
- K** Despite his personal limitations, Paul praised God for providing Jesus as the answer to his spiritual struggles.



NOTES

Freed (Rom. 7:4-6)

- Applying the illustration from marriage in verses 2-3, Paul explained to the Roman believers that they had died to the law and now belonged to Christ.
- The new life they had in the Spirit resulted in the fruit of a righteous life.

Conflicted (Rom. 7:14-23)

- Paul acknowledged a struggle between his old way of life and his new commitment to Christ. He explained that the problem was not with the law but with human nature.
- 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.

Hope (Rom. 7:24-25)

- Paul lamented his struggle with sin and called himself a “wretched man.” Rhetorically, he wondered who would rescue him from this spiritual tug-of-war.
- He answered his own question by expressing gratitude to God for the deliverance that comes through Jesus.

Summary Statements

Because sin remains a powerful force, believers should not be surprised when doing right is a struggle.

- Believers bear fruit for God when they live in the Spirit of God.
- Believers need to recognize that the struggle with sin is real, and they need help.
- Believers can express gratitude to God that they do not have to battle sin in their own power, but that Christ provides the victory.

Memory Verse

Romans 7:4

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.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

What is your favorite “rescue” story? Who comes to mind when you are asked to name the first person who ever rescued you? (PSG, p. 55)

- Everyone loves a good rescue story. Some rescues are dramatic, like a firefighter pulling 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 tutoring students who are struggling in class. Ultimately, nothing compares to the way Jesus rescues us.

Bonus: When have you felt pulled in the wrong direction? How did you respond?

EXPLORE

FREED (ROM. 7:4-6)

Bonus: When have you planted seeds? What did you expect from those seeds?

What practical difference should it make that a believer belongs to Christ? In what ways does it change your identity and purpose? (PSG, p. 58)

- Paul wanted his spiritual siblings to know that he shared a new relationship with them because they all belonged to Christ. Because of Jesus’s death, believers have died to the law. Likewise, because He rose from the dead, we are given new life when we put our faith in Him.
- In their lives before Christ, the Romans had lived to indulge their own pleasures. They lived under the destructive control of sinful passions. Like seeds, the sprouts became plants that produced fruit for death.
- The old letter of the law did not have the power to create true spirituality. It told us how to live, but we could never meet that standard. In Christ, though, we have both the desire to obey and the power to obey.

In what ways are you bearing fruit for God in your daily life? (PSG, p. 58)

CONFLICTED (ROM. 7:14-23)

Bonus: If you had a magic wand, what habit or characteristic would you change about yourself? Why?

- In verses 7-13, Paul said that the law was not sinful in itself. Without the law, we couldn’t recognize sin. For example, we know coveting is sin because the law forbids it.
- In verses 14-16, Paul explained that the problem was not with the law but with human nature. As evidence, he pointed to battles in his own life. At times, he did what he knew was wrong. Other times, he failed to do what he knew was right. He consistently made wrong choices.

- Paul did not understand why he continued to be enslaved to sin when he had trusted Christ to die to sin. This was the conflict. Paul found himself battling between the new nature and old nature. As believers, we still battle the power of sin even though Jesus has set us free from it.
- Because of the Holy Spirit in his life, Paul still had the desire to do good. He just lacked the ability in his own strength. Sin was still a formidable enemy that waged war against his godly intentions.

How does recognizing sin’s presence in you change the way you depend on God? (PSG, p. 61)

HOPE (ROM. 7:24-25)

Bonus: When have you experienced the power of gratitude in your life? What is it about gratitude that empowers us to move forward?

- Like Paul, we agonize over our inner conflict. The frustration over the endless battle within ourselves compels us to echo his one-word description of himself: wretched. We need someone to rescue us from our struggle.
- The answer to our dilemma is Jesus. Paul praised God for the help and guidance He provided through His Son. Like Paul, we trust Christ to help us as we manage the inner conflict with sin. Our hearts and minds will continue to serve the law of God, even while our flesh tries to nudge us toward obeying the law of sin.

In what ways can you live more consciously in the freedom Christ provides? (PSG, p. 62)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss some common conflicts with sin each person in the group might face.

What approach do they take in dealing with it? How does the conflict make them more productive and grateful believers? (PSG, p. 63)

Spend some time reflecting on sins that are a particular problem for you.

How do you show your gratitude to God for helping you to be victorious through Christ? (PSG, p. 63)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 62)

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 affects 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?***

Encourage each adult to find a partner and give each pair a sheet of paper and a pencil. Direct the pairs to complete the Bible Skill activity page 62 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers from each pair to share their outlines and their summary statements. Lead a brief discussion on the impact of sin on a believer's life. Include the questions at the end of the activity as part of the discussion.

OBJECT LESSON: ALARM CLOCK

Ask: ***What time did you get up this morning? Did you use an alarm or did you just wake up on your own?*** Allow volunteers to share their responses.

Display an alarm clock. Point out the “snooze” button and find out how often adults use that feature to get a little more sleep. Ask: ***What kinds of problems can the snooze button cause?*** Note that, in some ways, the snooze button represents a battle between getting up and staying in bed.

Talk about other situations where adults experience a tension between two options. Discuss how knowing what is right and doing what is right is often a struggle. Direct the group to read Romans 7:14-23 silently and to develop a summary of how Paul described this struggle between right and wrong.

Read Romans 7:24-25. Ask: ***Do you ever feel “wretched” because you can’t get things together in your walk with Jesus?*** Highlight the role Jesus plays in helping us overcome the dilemma Paul described.

DIG DEEPER

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is not about earning salvation. Rather, it's about living out the new life God offers through Christ. It is the ongoing process where believers are made more like Jesus, set apart from sin, and shaped by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification begins at the moment of salvation. When individuals are justified by faith in Jesus, they also are declared holy in God's sight. But it doesn't stop there. It continues through life as the believer grows in obedience and maturity. Human beings join God in this work by seeking to obey Jesus and to become more like Him each day.

This process is not about behavior management but heart transformation. The Holy Spirit works through Scripture, prayer, suffering, and the church to renew our minds and to change our desires (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). The truth is that holiness does not happen by accident. It's not something that just happens. You can wander into trouble, but you can never wander into purity. It takes effort, focus, and a lot of spiritual discipline.

Sanctification does not mean perfection in this life. Believers will continue struggling with sin, but the direction of their lives will change. They no longer live under sin's control. Instead, they live by the power of the Spirit, with growing victory over sin and deeper love for God and others (Gal. 5:16,22-23).

Sanctification is both a divine gift and a daily fight. God provides the power, but we participate with effort and intentionality (Phil. 2:12-13).

To summarize, sanctification is the Spirit-powered process of becoming more like Christ. It begins at the moment of salvation and continues as believers grow in grace, obedience, and holiness. It is not optional, and it will not be complete this side of heaven. It is the daily evidence of saving faith.