

10. Released from the law

Roman 7:1 – 8:4

Introduction

Have you ever gone through some great changes in your situation in life? What led to this change in your life?

In these chapters (5-8) Paul explains how the death of Christ has resulted in an enormous change in the life of the believer. In chapter 5 we discovered that we now have peace with God and as a result share in the hope of glory. In chapter 6 we learnt that the believer, because of the death of Christ, has died to sin. Sin is no longer our master because anyone who has died with Christ has been freed from the rule of sin. In the chapter that we are looking at today, we discover that this newfound freedom also involves being released from the law. Please read 7:1-8:4 to discover more about this.

Freed from the Law

Christians have been freed from the law. In order to find out how this has come about please read 7:1-6.

1. When does the authority of the law over a person end?
2. What points are being made by the apostle in his illustration about a married woman (2-3)?
3. How were believers released from the law?
4. What is the new way that Christians are to live?

Think about it

Why is the law powerless to bear fruit to God?

What do you think it means to belong to him who was raised from the dead?

The Law Defended

If the believer had to die to the law so that he could live a new life to God what then does the law achieve? Is the law responsible for the evil? Is the law somehow defective? In verses 7 to 21 the apostle defends the law arguing that it is holy, righteous and good (12). Paul defends the Law from a personal perspective – as one who lived under the Law. You will notice the personal pronoun, “I” scattered throughout the whole of this section. Paul speaks as one who has lived under the law. Please read verses 7 to 25 to discover how Paul upholds the law.

Believer or unbeliever?

Although it is popular to regard these verses as the internal struggle of a believer there are several good reasons for not doing so. The person described is fleshly not spiritual (14). They are described as sold as slaves to sin. Paul however described believers as having been set free from sin and become slaves to God (6:22). The best explanation is that the apostle is describing his own experience as a Jew or the convert

5. How does sin take advantage of the Law (7-12; c/f 5)?

6. Who or what is responsible for death working out in our lives (13)? Who have we got to blame?

7. The apostle describes what life was like for him (and all those under the law) without the Spirit (14-21). This is how it used to be. What was life like for those under the law before they were set free?

Think about it

Why wasn't just having the law enough for those who were under the law?

What role then does the law play and is a good one?

Set Free

The situation was hopeless. In the remainder of the chapter Paul sums up his wretchedness living under the law and gives thanks that it is not like this anymore. Please read 7:21 to 8:4 to discover how things changed for the apostle.

8. Paul argues that he could do nothing to free himself from this wretched situation. Why then does he give thanks to God (25)?

9. What has the believer been set free from and who released him (8:1-2)?

10. How was this achieved (8:3-4)?

Think about it

Why was our situation so wretched? Do you think we truly appreciate how bad things were? Do you think we are all as equally wretched?

What should be the believer's response and attitude to the victory that Christ has won?

If in Christ the victory over sin has been won, why then do we continue to sin?

Conclusion

We have a new way to live. Our old former way of life was truly wretched. We were slaves to sin and everything that we did only always bore fruit that deserved death. But that isn't how it is now fortunately.

Think about it

Paul will go on to describe the new life we are to live in the remainder of chapter 8. He will explain what it means “to serve in the new way of the Spirit” (7:6) and what bearing fruit for God in this world (7:4) looks like. We will look at this in the next study. Please think about what such a life will be like and discuss what you think might be involved in living such a life.

Going Further

1. Please continue to learn one of the memory verses suggested in the last study. Please think about what you find significant about this verse and why not think about letting another member of the group or someone on Sunday know why this verse is important to you.

2. Read Romans chapter 8 verses 5 to 17 in preparation for the next study. In this section, Paul has contrasted walking according to the flesh with walking according to the Spirit (8:4) You might like to consider what Paul means by “the flesh” and perhaps read the New Bible Dictionary article on “Flesh” to help prepare for this study.”.