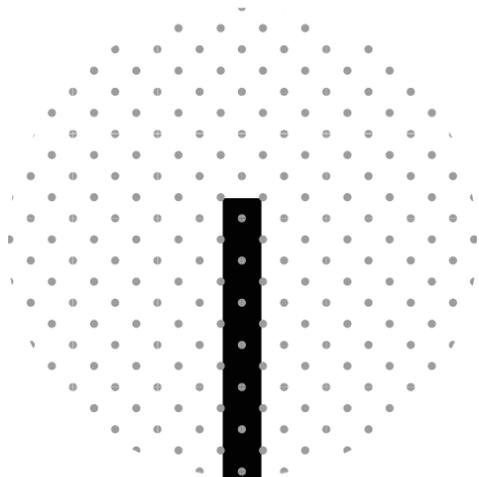


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Dead to Sin. Alive in Christ.



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ESV Text Edition: 2016

CONTENTS

Letter from the Pastors	4
Introduction	5
How to Memorize a Large Portion of Scripture	11
Weekly Discussion Questions and Journals	12

LETTER FROM THE PASTORS

Dear LBC,

Time matters to God. He created the world to operate according to a rhythm of days, times, and seasons (Gen 1:14). God has constructed each week to follow a pattern for the church: we begin each week by celebrating Christ's resurrection (Sunday) and then are sent out into the week to do the work that God would have us to do. The Church has long understood the importance of rhythms of life and built a calendar around the various "seasons" of church life. At LBC, we generally adopt the practices of the historic Church and thus follow a modified church calendar.

Our year begins with Advent, celebrating the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Coming out of Advent, we then focus on the life of Christ, usually preaching from the Gospels. When Christ lived, he was going somewhere—to the cross. Christ's march to the cross is the reason why we celebrate Lent. Lent is not a time to do a few practices to earn points with God. Instead, it is a time to really focus upon the sacrificial death of our Lord. But Christ did not stay dead! The season of Lent culminates in Easter. He is risen indeed!

After Easter, we then transition to a series on "Christian living" because it is the power of Christ's resurrection which gives us the power to live for him. This year, we are focusing on Romans 6-8, the quintessential passage of living the new life by the power of Christ's resurrection.

Living the new life in Christ with you,

Your pastors, Dennis, Dan, and Chris.

INTRODUCTION

We are saved by believing the gospel message, the good news that life with God is available through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel not only brings us into a right relationship with God, it is also the way we grow in our faith. We are made new through the gospel, but, as Romans 6-8 shows us, we are also becoming new. Romans 6-8 shows us how to live the new life we have in Christ and how to put Christ's power on display in our own lives.

Summary

The apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans as a fundraising letter to support his collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-29). To validate his request, Paul presents his gospel message to the Roman believers so that they might know he has been called by God (Rom 1:1). The whole book is about the good news of the gospel (Rom 1:16-17). For the good news to be good, however, Paul first sets it against the backdrop of the bad news: all people are condemned sinners before God (Rom 1:18-3:20). God did not leave us under condemnation, however, as he sent Christ as the sacrifice for our sins (Rom 3:21-31). We can now receive the gift of new life with God through faith, not our works (4:1-25). Our salvation has been won by Christ through a lavish gift of "super-abounding" grace (5:1-21).

Since we are saved by grace, can we just live however we want? Paul answers with an empathic, "No!" We should not return to the old way of living in sin because we have been made new in Christ (6:1-23), freed from the Law (7:1-25), and given hope of eternal life (8:1-39). Reflecting on the gifts that come from God through Christ causes Paul to grieve for his fellow Jews because most reject Christ as the Messiah (9:1-5). Does widespread rejection of Christ by the Jews mean that God's word has failed? By no means! Just because someone has a particular DNA does not mean they are entitled to salvation (9:6-33). Furthermore, salvation in Christ must be pursued by faith, not works (10:1-21). Finally, in God's strange plan, rejection by some leads to

the salvation of others, culminating in the accomplishment of God's purposes (11:1-36).

Because God is so merciful, believers must now live in a new way (12-16). They must renew their minds and use their gifts to serve the body of Christ (12:1-21). They must submit to the government and live loving, holy lives (13:1-14). They must also maintain unity within the church by accepting one another's convictions on issues that are not essential to the gospel (14:1-15:13). Paul then wraps up the letter by stating his travel intentions and commending those who have served alongside him in the gospel (15:14-16:27).

Themes

New Life in Christ: Romans 6-8 explains to us how Christ has given us new life. Our new life in Christ comes through our union with him in his life, death, and resurrection (6:3-5). Our "old self"—who we were "in Adam"—has been crucified. In its place, a "new self" has been given to us (6:6-11). We are also becoming new. We grow in our new life in Christ by remembering our identity in Christ and committing ourselves to the Lord (6:12-23). The purpose of having a new life is for the benefit of others. We have been made new "so that we serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (7:6). Our new life in Christ is not complete, however. We still will struggle with sin (7:7-25). Despite our struggles, we find reassurance that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). We also look to the future when the fullness of our life will be brought to us by Christ (8:17-22).

Sin: Despite being made new in Christ, Christians still struggle with sin. Sin is personified as a slave master who leads those it holds captive to death (6:15-21). Christ has released us from slavery to sin and has become our Lord instead. Sin is also a sneaky and pernicious force which uses even something good like the Law to condemn us (7:7-13). Christians often struggle with a "Jekyll and Hyde" mentality, waffling between wanting to serve God and being lured away from him by sin (7:14-25). Thankfully, Christians are no longer under the Law and can stay away from the wiles of sin. The power of sin is explained further in Romans 8 by defining as our "flesh" (8:5-8). The "flesh" is equivalent to the "old self" of Romans 6. It is the part of us that has

been crucified with Christ and died, but still holds some sway over us this side of eternity. The flesh can be thought of as our mental and bodily desires detached from the guiding power of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit: Christ has freed us to serve others by the power of the Spirit (7:6). It is also the Spirit himself who brings us freedom and empowers us to walk according to God's will (8:2-4). The people who allow the Holy Spirit to shape their lives experience peace (8:6-8). While Christians may doubt their salvation due to continued sin this side of eternity, all Christians reside in the realm of the Spirit, not the flesh (8:9). The Holy Spirit guarantees our resurrection, because he raised Christ (8:11). He is also the power by which we put sin to death (8:13). He leads us into holiness and closeness with God (8:14-16). Even though Christians are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, they still groan due to the brokenness of this world (8:23). Yet the Spirit has an even more powerful groaning—praying to the Father—which provides Christians the strength they need to endure (8:26-27).

Romans and the Bible's Big Story

The story of the Bible revolves around God's rescue plan of his creatures. He intended for people to be fruitful and multiply over the face of the earth (Gen 1:26-28). Instead of following him, Adam and Eve rebelled against him, bringing sin, death, and destruction upon the earth (Gen 3:1-7). God did not utterly destroy them, however. Nor did he totally wipe out their descendents on the earth despite things getting so bad that he wanted to (Gen 6:5-7)! Instead, God saved Noah and his family and made a fresh start (Gen 9:1-17). But even Noah failed to obey God. So God chose Abraham (Gen 12:1-2).

God promised Abraham that his descendents would become a great nation and one of his descendents in particular would save the world (Gen 22:18). God made good on his promise of a great nation to Abraham as the nation of Israel was formed (Exod 19:5-6). But even though Israel was God's "son," they still disobeyed (Exod 4:22-23). God then installed a king over Israel for maybe through the rule of one righteous person God's plan would be fulfilled. So God chose David to be king over his people (1 Sam 16:1-23). God made promises to David that he would have a perpetual dynasty and everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:8-14). But the Davidic king would still have to obey the

Lord. God's plan would certainly be fulfilled but only through a perfect son and obedient king. Unfortunately, no king of Israel was fully faithful in the Old Testament times. So God exiled his people because they turned from him. But even after the people returned to the land, they still had no king ruling over them.

When Jesus enters the scene, he first proclaims that the kingdom of God has drawn near (Mark 1:15). The kingdom is here because the king is near! Throughout the New Testament, the biblical authors describe Jesus as the "Son of David" (Matt 1:1; Rom 1:3). Jesus is the fully obedient Davidic king who wins salvation for his people on the cross. Such a glorious truth would not only need to be told but also explained. After the four biographies of Jesus and the book of Acts, which describe who Jesus is and what he came to do, the rest of the New Testament is made up mostly of Paul's letters. These letters seek to explain more fully the implications of the gospel and how they apply to life within the church. Romans is telling us that we are part of a much larger story and that it has implications for how we are to live as the people of God.

Outline

Romans is a letter so it has a typical three-part division like most letters do: an opening (1:1-15), a body (1:16-15:13), and a conclusion (15:14-16:27). Yet categorizing the letter according to its literary features can make it hard to see its flow. Below is an outline based on the topics addressed in the letter:

I. Introduction (1:1-17)

A. Paul's ministry (1:1-15)

B. Paul's gospel (1:16-17)

II. Need for the Gospel: All Have Sinned (1:18-3:20)

A. All people have sinned (1:18-32)

B. "Religious" Jews have sinned (2:1-29).

C. The whole world is under sin (3:1-20)

III. Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith (3:21-4:25)

A. Justification made possible by Christ's death (3:21-31)

- B. Justification received by grace through faith (4:1-25).
- C. Justification gives peace and grace (5:1-21)

IV. Growth in the Gospel: New Life in Christ (6:1-8:39)

- A. Understand our identity in Christ (6:1-23)
- B. Do not turn back to the Law (7:1-25)
- C. Find hope in the Spirit (8:1-39)

V. Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel's Rejection (9:1-11:36)

- A. Salvation does not come through DNA but God's election (9:1-33)
- B. Salvation does not come through works but faith (10:1-21)
- C. Salvation does not come through human expectations but God's plan (11:1-36)

VI. Community of the Gospel: Unity in the Church (12:1-15:13)

- A. Unity pursued through transformation and giftedness (12:1-21)
- B. Unity pursued by submission and holiness (13:1-14)
- C. Unity pursued by accepting one another (14:1-15:13)

VII. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

- A. Paul's hope and travel plans (15:14-33)
- B. Paul's fellow workers (16:1-27)

How to Read New Testament Letters

The New Testament letters contain some of the most beloved portions of Scripture as well as some of the most misinterpreted passages in the whole Bible. The reason why we can struggle to properly understand the NT letters is because we forget that the Bible contains many different kinds of genres of literature. Some books are narratives while others are letters. Therefore, it's important to remember what Paul's letters are...letters.

These letters are written by a specific person to a specific church. Too many Christians think that Paul's letters are like systematic theology textbooks, providing an outlined and schematic way of thinking about our faith. But Paul was an early church planter and he wrote these letters as a way of staying in touch with the congregations he planted as well as teaching them the gospel

message. Understanding that these letters are written to specific congregations helps us see that Paul is addressing real issues going on inside real churches. We can misread these letters, however, if we fail to attend to the cultural and historical context in which they were written. When Paul tells the Corinthians to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (2 Cor 13:12), he is not necessarily telling us today that we have to do that. Instead, we can see the principle that Paul is using that sits behind his specific instruction to a specific congregation: greet one another like family.

These letters often make logical arguments. Paul may not have written systematic theology textbooks, but he did write coherently to these churches. Many of his letters are trying to argue a point and instruct these congregations. Therefore, it’s important to follow his argument and not take verses out of context. For example, when Paul says that those “in the flesh cannot please God” he is not claiming that because human beings exist in a physical body, they are incapable of pleasing God (Rom 8:8). Paul is not using the term “flesh” to mean “physical body” but rather a human being who is “in Adam” versus someone who is “in Christ.” Those who are in Adam cannot merit any standing before God. Only those who have been forgiven in Christ can stand before God and then walk in his way. In fact, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians can fulfill “the requirements of the Law,” that is, Christians can please God (Rom 8:4). Therefore, following closely to how Paul develops his argument can keep us on track in reading his letters the right way.

How to Memorize Large Portions of Scripture

Here’s a practical method of memorizing Scripture found in *When I Don’t Desire God* by John Piper.¹

“Sample daily procedure: The following is an example of how someone could go about memorizing Romans 8 at the rate of one verse per day:

- Day one: Read Romans 8:1 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. Be sure to include the verse number. Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You’re done for the day.

¹ I changed the Scripture references in the book from Ephesians to Romans to match what we are memorizing as a church.

- Day two: Yesterday's verse first!! Recite yesterday's verse, Romans 8:1 ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. Now, do your new verse. Read Romans 8:2 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. Be sure to include the verse number. Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.
- Day three: Yesterday's verse first!! Recite yesterday's verse, Romans 8:2 ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Again, you should look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. Old verses next, altogether: Recite Romans 8:1-2 together once, being sure to include the verse numbers. Now, do your new verse. Read Romans 8:3 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. Be sure to include the verse number. Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.
- Day four: Yesterday's verse first!! Recite yesterday's verse, Romans 8:3 ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Again, you should look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. Old verses next, altogether: Recite Romans 8:1-3 together once, being sure to include the verse numbers. Now, do your new verse. Read Romans 8:4 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. Be sure to include the verse number. Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.

This cycle would continue through the entire book. Obviously, the "old verses altogether" stage will soon swell to take the most time of all. That's exactly the way it should be. The entire book of Romans can be read at a reasonable rate in less than thirty minutes. Therefore, the "old verses altogether" stage of your review should not take longer than that on any given day. Do it with the Bible ready at hand, in case you draw a blank or get stuck...there's no shame in looking, and it actually helps to nail down troublesome verses so they will never be trouble again.

Week of April 11

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 6:1-11

Context

According to Paul, all humanity is sinful, condemned before God (1:18-3:20). The only hope for humanity is to put their faith in Jesus Christ and what he has done on the cross (3:21-5:11). While Adam plunged the whole world into sin, Christ can save anyone by his grace (5:12-21). In this week's questions, we will confront the question that arises whenever grace is proclaimed: "If we are saved by grace, why not just live for ourselves and bank on God's forgiveness?"

Study Questions

1. Why should a forgiven, justified person make a strong effort not to sin?
2. What makes it possible for a person to live a new life?
3. How does being united to Christ through his death change our relationship to sin?
4. In a person's new relationship with God, what is his or her relationship to sin supposed to be?

Application Questions

1. How does knowing our identity, being "in Christ," help us to fight sin?
2. When are you most tempted to go back to the old way of living under sin? What guardrails can you put in place to help you overcome temptation?
3. How would you describe the character of someone who is alive to God in Christ? Would those things describe yourself? Why or why not?

ROMANS 8 CHALLENGE

Overview

The Romans 8 Challenge presents you with the opportunity to memorize all of Romans 8:1-39 over the next twelve weeks during the sermon series. Memorizing Scripture is one of the best practices for your spiritual life. Nothing gets Scripture into your mind like the struggle of attempting to memorize it. While reading this, you may be thinking to yourself, “There’s no way I could ever memorize Romans 8. You don’t know my mind...it’s like a sieve!” The value of memorizing is not solely in retaining information. It is the very act of struggle which helps us grow in Christ. Struggling to memorize Scripture forces us to slow down and really try to understand it and spend time in the word. That’s where the value is.

Every week a portion of Romans 8 will be printed here in the English Standard Version (ESV) to memorize (Feel free to use any other translation of your choice). Memorizing each week’s verses will keep you on track to memorize Romans 8. Every week there will also be verses to review so that you don’t forget what you’ve already memorized!

For help memorizing, see page 11 on “How to Memorize Large Portions of Scripture.”

Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:1-4

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Week of April 18

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 6:12-19

Context

Last week we learned about our new identity in Christ (Romans 6:1-11). Today, we will explore another related topic: How should we actually live under God's grace since we are no longer slaves of sin?

Study Questions

1. What change in attitude and action towards God happens in a person who follows Christ?
2. How does being "under grace" change a person?
3. How is sin described in 6:16-19? What does this tell us about the power of sin?
4. What are the results of being a slave to obedience to God?

Application Questions

1. What is your typical attitude toward sin? What attitude should a Christian have towards sin?
2. In what ways can sin no longer be our master as believers, even though we may still commit specific sins?
3. How can we break the power of sin in our lives according to the passage?
4. How does being in community help us fight sin?

ROMANS 8 CHALLENGE

Overview

Every week a portion of Romans 8 will be printed here in the English Standard Version (ESV) to memorize (Feel free to use any other translation of your choice). Memorizing each week's verses will keep you on track to

memorize Romans 8. Every week there will also be verses to review so that you don't forget what you've already memorized!

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:5-8

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Review: Romans 8:1-4

Week of April 25

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 6:20-23

Context

In Christ, we are new (6:1-11). We are also called to become new by presenting ourselves to God (6:12-19). In today's passage, we will study the outcomes of a life lived for sin and a life lived for God.

Study Questions

1. What was our status before becoming a Christian? How would that status affect our daily lives?
2. What is the result of being a slave of righteousness?
3. Typically, Christians think of Romans 6:23 as an evangelistic verse to share with non-Christians. But in context, Romans 6:23 is a Christian living verse written specifically to the Christians in Rome. How does Romans 6:23 encourage us in our Christian living?

Application Questions

1. What are the benefits and pleasures of righteous living?
2. Why can't people be their own master, enslaved to neither God nor sin?
3. How can we demonstrate whole-hearted obedience as a Group this week?
4. In what areas of life do you need God's help to loosen the grip of certain sins?

ROMANS 8 CHALLENGE

Overview

Every week a portion of Romans 8 will be printed here in the English Standard Version (ESV) to memorize (Feel free to use any other translation of your choice). Memorizing each week's verses will keep you on track to

memorize Romans 8. Every week there will also be verses to review so that you don't forget what you've already memorized!

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:9-11

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Review: Romans 8:1-4, 5-8

Week of May 2

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 7:1-6

Context

The book of Romans clearly illustrates that those who try to earn their salvation through obedience to God's Law will come up empty (Rom 3:20; 10:3-4). Just as it is futile to attempt to earn your salvation through the Law, so it is equally futile to try to grow through the Law. Romans 7 is Paul's attempt to show the limitations of the Law: it can neither save nor grow Christians. This week, we will see how instead of being under the Law, Christians are now in a new relationship with God.

Study Questions

1. How does Paul illustrate a Christian's relationship to the Law?
2. What is the goal or purpose of the Christian's new life?
3. What did the Law do before we became Christians?
4. What is our new status after coming to Christ?

Application Questions

1. What guides our behavior today if we are no longer under the Law?
2. How does the Spirit help us please God in a way the Law does not?
3. How can knowing God's unconditional grace change your behavior?
4. Who can you serve this week either as a Group or as an individual?

ROMANS 8 CHALLENGE

Overview

Every week a portion of Romans 8 will be printed here in the English Standard Version (ESV) to memorize (Feel free to use any other translation of your choice). Memorizing each week's verses will keep you on track to

memorize Romans 8. Every week there will also be verses to review so that you don't forget what you've already memorized!

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:12-15

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Review: Romans 8:5-8, 9-11

Excursus: Who is Paul talking about in Romans 7:7-25?

Many Christians identify with the struggle with sin in this passage. So naturally, many Christians assume that it is talking about the experience of a believer who is grappling with sin. Other Christians point out, however, that we are new in Christ and not "sold into bondage to sin" as Romans 7:14 describes. Therefore, some Christians claim that this passage is talking about unbelievers. Here are a few of the main views of Romans 7:7-25:

1. Paul is describing the life of a Christian

By far, the most popular view among most Christians is that Paul is describing his experience after becoming a Christian. Many Christians can relate to the "Jekyll and Hyde" sense of the Christian life where they want to follow God but still find themselves tripping up in sin (7:15-20). Furthermore, the blame for sinning is always laid at the feet of sin, rather than Paul himself (7:17, 20). The fact that Paul "delights" in the law of God would suggest that he is a believer (7:22).

2. Paul is describing the life of an unbeliever

Some Christians argue that Paul is describing his life before he became a Christian. They contend that Christians are not "sold into bondage to sin" (7:14). To be in bondage to sin is the experience of unbelievers. Furthermore, they point out that the Christian life is necessarily marked by the repeated failure mentioned in Romans 7 whereas the life of faith is marked by victory. Romans 7 depicts the life of an unbeliever, while Romans 8 depicts the life of a believer.

3. Paul is describing the experience of Israel under the Law

Another view is that Paul uses the language of “I” to personify the nation of Israel. Israel had a relationship with God prior to the giving of the Law in Exodus 19–24. Once Israel received the Law, however, things went downhill quickly as Stephen Dempster explains: “Sinai does something profoundly negative to Israel.”² On the one hand, Israel has a law and longs to keep it. On the other hand, they are unable to due to their sinfulness. Therefore, what Paul so vividly demonstrates is that what Israel needs is not the Law, but the Gospel.

4. Paul is describing the experience of anyone who attempts to overcome sin through the Law

Some Christians believe that Paul makes a very general point in Romans 7:7–25: people cannot use the Law to overcome sin. Therefore, the exact state of Paul’s soul (pre-conversion or post-conversion) does not really matter, neither does it matter who the “I” explicitly refers to, whether Paul as an individual or Paul as a representative of Israel. What matters is that the result is the same for any person or group that tries to use the Law to overcome sin: utter failure.

The fact that all four views can be grounded in the text means we must hold our conclusions humbly. Good Christians have disagreed about this passage for hundreds of years. Yet the core truth of each view is true: the Law cannot save, only Christ can.

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE JOURNAL: Romans 7:1–6

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,

² Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 112.

Week of May 9

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 7:7-12

Context

Paul wrote Romans to a church filled with Jewish believers in Jesus. Naturally, they would have many questions about the Law of God, since they had previously devoted their whole life to it. Hearing about the limitations of the Law may have caused the Jewish believers in Jesus within the congregation to consider that the Law was, in fact, evil! Paul, however, seeks to dispel such a notion in Romans 7:7-12.

Study Questions

1. What is Paul's answer to the question, "Is the Law sin?"
2. What actually leads to Paul's spiritual death and alienation with God?
3. How did sin "use" the Law?
4. What conclusion does Paul draw about the nature of the Law?

Application Questions

1. What are some ways you have seen people respond to the commands and ethical teachings of the Bible?
2. How can understanding God's law be discouraging to a person?
3. How does the Law lead us to Christ?
4. How can we maintain a passion for holiness without resorting to legalism?

Overview

Every week a portion of Romans 8 will be printed here in the English Standard Version (ESV) to memorize (Feel free to use any other translation of your choice). Memorizing each week's verses will keep you on track to memorize Romans 8. Every week there will also be verses to review so that you don't forget what you've already memorized!

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:16-18

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Review: Romans 8:9-11, 12-15

Week of May 16

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 7:13-25

Context

Paul wants Christians to live by grace, not Law (6:14). Freedom from the Law, however, does not mean that the Law itself is evil. Sin, not the Law, is the real problem (7:7-12). In Romans 7:13-25, Paul reiterates the real culprit which produces spiritual death: sin. While Christians find themselves wanting to please God, many still find themselves entangled with sin. Such a scenario may produce despair within us if we rely on the Law. Paul presents us with something better to rely on.

Study Questions

1. What is the experience of the person who tries to use the Law to overcome sin?
2. What did Paul blame for his continuing failure to do good?
3. How does Paul describe the struggle with sin?
4. Who did Paul turn to in his agonizing situation?

Application Questions

1. How have you experienced a struggle with sin similar to what Paul describes here?
2. What hope do we have of deliverance from sin here on earth?
3. How can we take hold of the power of Christ to overcome sin?
4. What should we do when we become discouraged and confused in our Christian lives?

ROMANS 8 CHALLENGE

Overview

Every week a portion of Romans 8 will be printed here in the English Standard Version (ESV) to memorize (Feel free to use any other translation of your choice). Memorizing each week's verses will keep you on track to memorize Romans 8. Every week there will also be verses to review so that you don't forget what you've already memorized!

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:19-22

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope
21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Review: Romans 8:12-15, 16-18

Week of May 23

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 8:1-8

Context

Human beings are deceived and killed by sin (7:9). While they may desire to do good, their best efforts are often thwarted by the deceitfulness of sin (7:13-20). The all-encompassing power of sin leads Paul to ask a question, “O wretched man that I am, who will save me from the body of this death?” (7:24). In a way, all of Romans 8 is the answer to that question. This week, we will see how we overcome sin and begin exploring what life united to God’s Spirit looks like.

Study Questions

1. What is the status of the person trusts in Jesus Christ?
2. What did God do that the Law was powerless to do?
3. What is the difference between those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit?

Application Questions

1. What feelings of condemnation and rejection may Christians feel?
2. In what ways does knowing Christ set us free?
3. What does unchecked sin and selfishness produce in someone’s life? Your life?
4. How does the Spirit produce real change within us?

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:23-25

23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Review: Romans 8:16-18, 19-22

Week of May 30

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 8:9-17

Context

Believing in Christ leads us to being forgiven and being made a new creation (8:1-3). Christians can now fulfill God's demands by living according to the Spirit and not the flesh (8:4-8). Sometimes Christians may still find themselves reverting back to the old way and sinning. In Romans 8:9-17, Paul continues to highlight a Christian's new identity and how to battle sin.

Study Questions

1. What hope does Paul give Christians in 8:9?
2. What promises does God make to us through the Holy Spirit?
3. What are the benefits of being a child of God?

Application Questions

1. How does seeing and experiencing God as a loving Father change your understanding of what it means to be a Christian?
2. Describe a time that God's love was made real to you.
3. How can we fight sin together through the power of the Spirit?
4. What changes have you been resisting in your life that you are now willing to allow your loving heavenly Father to complete?

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:26-27

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Review: Romans 8:19-22, 23-25

Week of June 6

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 8:18-21

Context

Christians are forgiven and free (8:1-4). They can now live according to the Spirit and not the old way of the flesh (8:5-8). God has given His Spirit to us which ensures our resurrection in the future and the power to fight sin now (8:9-15). He also gives us great assurance and an amazing inheritance (8:16-17). This week, we will see how to make our way through the difficulties of this life.

Study Questions

1. How did Paul describe the difference between his present and his future?
2. What is the world waiting to see?
3. Why has the world been forced to wait?

Application Questions

1. Why is waiting for God so difficult sometimes?
2. In what ways do Christians live in glorious freedom right now? What kind of freedom are we waiting for?
3. What does God promise us to make suffering bearable?
4. How deep do your roots run in this world? What are you completely tied to in the here and now? What do you need to let go of?

ROMANS 8 CHALLENGE

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:28-30

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Review: Romans 8:23-25, 26-27

Week of June 13

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 8:22-27

Context

The Spirit gives the promise of resurrection (8:10-11). He also provides for the power to resist the sin (8:12-13), the boldness to resist fear (8:14-15), the assurance of a future inheritance to resist despair (8:16-17). In the meantime, we suffer along with the world, waiting for Jesus to return (8:18-21). In Romans 8:22-27, Paul realistically portrays the reality of living in the world: we groan under the effects of sin. But Paul also points us to a deeper reality that anchors our hope.

Study Questions

1. What human experience does Paul use an illustration of the current state of the world?
2. What are the children of God doing in the midst of the corrupt world?
3. What is and is not genuine hope?
4. How does the Spirit help us in our weakness?

Application Questions

1. What frustrations do you feel as you wait for Christ's return?
2. What counsel would you give a Christian who has grown weary of waiting?
3. What is real hope? Who can you share real hope with this week?
4. What do we learn about God's love for us when we realize that the Holy Spirit helps us even when we cannot pray?

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:31-34

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Review: Romans 8:26-27, 28-30

Week of June 20

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 8:28-34

Context

The Bible is very explicit that Christians will have to endure suffering in this life. Paul himself is an example of this and he also encourages believers to wait in hope for the coming of Christ (8:22-27). Sometimes, however, it can be hard to see God's hand at work in our lives, especially when we suffer. This week, we will study one of the most glorious passages in the Bible. Often called the "golden chain" of salvation, these verses can anchor us in God's truth even amidst the storms of this life.

Study Questions

1. How does God work in all situations and events of a person's life?
2. What has God done for his people in salvation?
3. How does Paul know that God takes care of his people?
4. Why does Paul feel confident that God is not against his people or condemning them?

Application Questions

1. When have you seen God produce good results out of a bad situation in your life?
2. Which aspect of salvation (predestination, calling, justification, or glorification) encourages you the most right now?
3. How can we know that bad times aren't necessarily a signal of God's displeasure with us?
4. How can we encourage each other with these verses this week?

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:35-37

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Review: Romans 8:28-30, 31-34

Week of June 27

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 8:35-39

Context

God works out all things for the good of his people (8:28). He has gone to great lengths to save and will bring them into his glory (8:29-30). Christians cannot be spoken against or condemned because they are secure in Christ (8:31-33). In the final passage of our series, we will see that the bond between Christ and his people is unbreakable!

Study Questions

1. What possible tragedies or hardships are unable to separate us from the love of Christ?
2. How are God's people to respond to persecutions and tragedies?

Application Questions

1. What gives us confidence as we go through hard times?
2. What situations in the past have caused you to rely on God's conquering power and great love? What situations are you currently facing that are forcing you to rely on those same things?
3. When has God's love been most "real" to you?
4. How can we encourage one another in our Group to take hold of God's love?

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Memory Verses for this week: Romans 8:38-39

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Review: Recite all Romans 8. CONGRATULATIONS, YOU DID IT!



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