

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 16, 2015

Written by Laura Bentley, middler MDiv student, and brought to you by the **Church Planting Initiative** at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

SCRIPTURE

ROMANS 7:1-12

1 Do you not know, brothers and sisters — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? 2 Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. 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 In the same way, my friends, you 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 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 discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

7 What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived 10 and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

DEVOTIONAL

Self-improvement. It's our cultural answer to the nagging feeling that we are not quite good enough, that we are falling short of where we ought to be. We aren't doing enough, and we have to change that. Unfortunately, the season of Lent can take on this flavor of self-improvement rather than repentance.

But our repentance doesn't come from striving to do better and be better. We have "died to the law through the body of Christ." Jesus, in taking on our human nature and the consequence of our sin, has freed us from the striving to do and be better in order that we might freely bear fruit to God. When we realize the freedom we have in Christ, we also see the sin that holds us back from living out that reality. We see the sin that inhibits the intimate relationship God has initiated with us, and we turn from that sin. So what still holds you back from living as who you are in Christ? How might you repent out of gratitude for what God has already done, rather than out of guilt or keeping score?

PRAYER

Lord God, thank you for who You have made me in Christ. Make me increasingly aware of this reality. And as I become aware of the sins in my life that hold me back from being who I truly am, give me the grace to repent, so that I may be open to serving in the new way of the Spirit. Amen.

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