

## Lesson 6      9 June 2013

### The Purpose of the Law

**Lesson Scope:** [Romans 7](#)

#### Lesson Focus

The thoughts of Romans 6 continue into chapter 7. Paul explained that sin shall not control us "for [we] are not under the law, but under grace" (6:14). Next he pointed out the folly of trying to excuse even the occasional act of sin. Sin may not be excused by saying that we live in a day of grace.

Now one more argument presents itself. By looking critically at 6:14, some might get the idea that sin is a result of the Law (7:7). How repulsive! Just the opposite is true. The Law was needed to restrain evil. It explains the curse and the course of sin. Yet it was unable to supply the strength to live above sin. Praise the Lord; victory is claimed in the end of chapter 7 and is further explained in chapter 8.

The Law did not produce sin, but it did expose the reality of sin. Although the Old Testament Law could not deliver man from sin, it served as a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ.

Read Romans 7:12, and list ways that the Law is holy, just, and good. Remember, it has always been the will of God that none should perish. The Old Testament was not a failed plan but a step in the plan of bringing many sons into glory.

**Lesson Aim:** To reveal the nature and function of the Law in God's plan.

**Theme Verse:** [Galatians 3:24](#). Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

#### Lesson Text

##### The Law—Temporary

[Romans 7:1-6](#) <sup>1</sup> Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? <sup>2</sup> For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to

*her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. <sup>3</sup> So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. <sup>4</sup> Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. <sup>6</sup> But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

### **The Law—Holy**

**Romans 7:7-13** <sup>7</sup> What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. <sup>8</sup> But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. <sup>9</sup> For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. <sup>10</sup> And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*. <sup>12</sup> Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. <sup>13</sup> Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

### **The Law—a Schoolmaster**

**Romans 7:14-25** <sup>14</sup> For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. <sup>16</sup> If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. <sup>17</sup> Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. <sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. <sup>22</sup>

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: <sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **The Law—Temporary**

1. How does Paul's discussion of marriage illustrate the believer's experience?
2. Contrast the phrases "newness of spirit" and "oldness of the letter" (7:6).

#### **The Law—Holy**

3. At what point in a person's life is he "alive without the law"?
4. What does the Law reveal about sin?
5. How does verse 8 expose man's evil tendencies?

#### **The Law—a Schoolmaster**

6. Of what significance is the frequent repetition of the words I and me in these verses?
7. To what extent may this struggle exist in the life of the Christian?
8. At what point does God deliver the wretched man (Romans 7:24)?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

The word law is used twenty-three times in this chapter. Although the same Greek word is used each time, various laws come into focus—the Mosaic Law (Romans 7:1, 14-16), law in a general sense (Romans 7:2-3), the law of inherent evil or the sin nature (Romans 7:21), the law of God or the principle of holiness (Romans 7:22,25), the law of the mind or the conscience (Romans 7:23), and the law that sin has more power than a man can overcome in his own strength (Romans 7:23, 25).

Concupiscence (Romans 7:8) and lust (Romans 7:7) are nouns translated from the same word. Covet (Romans 7:7) is the verb form of the same word. Therefore, lust used in a broad sense could fit all three places.

"Alive without the law once" (Romans 7:9) probably refers to the innocent state of a child. At this point in his life, he does not feel the weight

of law on his conscience.

Verse 25 may appear to indicate that our inner Christian life is separate from and may contrast with our actual deeds. But Paul is not promoting a divided loyalty. One serves either the law of God or the law of sin.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **The Law—Temporary**

1. The Law was temporary (Romans 7:1-2). The Mosaic Law was extremely important to those who lived under the Old Covenant. But Jesus has fulfilled it. Now we have no more obligation to it than a widow has to her former husband. The law that bound no longer applies.

2. The Law has been replaced by a better covenant and relationship (7:2-6). Jesus clearly indicated this when He said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, . . . but I say unto you . . ." (Matthew 5). Yet He also said in the same passage, "I am not come to destroy [the Law], but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). This happened when Christ offered the perfect sacrifice on Calvary, and the way literally opened into the presence of God as the temple veil rent. Saints under the Old Covenant were not permitted to approach the glory of God. But the New Covenant invites us to "draw near." Natural marriage is a type of the close relationship of the believer with Christ. This relationship far exceeds what the Old Testament saints experienced.

### **The Law—Holy**

3. The Law makes men aware of sin (Romans 7:7-13). Apart from law (Romans 7:8-9), a person will not know when he transgresses. Think of one who has never heard the Gospel. He has a moral consciousness of right and wrong, but only after he hears God's holy laws does he realize where the boundaries are. Now awakens within him a desire to explore the forbidden (Romans 7:8), like a boy's compulsion to touch wet paint when he is instructed to avoid it.

Before conversion, we came face to face with God's requirements. They identified sin and our helplessness to be victorious in our own strength.

4. The Law provided sin-prone man with the divine standard of righteousness (Romans 7:12-14). The humanist uses himself as the measuring stick of righteousness and says that man is basically good by nature. Look at socialism, the theory of evolution, and the general deterioration of society around us. Clearly, the only good that exists in this world

stems directly from the Word. It is the rule that keeps sin-prone mankind acceptable in God's sight.

### **The Law—a Schoolmaster**

5. The Law fosters a hatred for sin (Romans 7:13). The detailed ceremonial system proved that God does not take sin lightly. And he who walked in the spirit of the Law developed a subconscious hatred for sin as well. This process of indoctrinating the conscience with God's Word always makes man uncomfortable with sin.

6. The Law reveals that mere good intentions and self-effort will fail (Romans 7:14-19). The Law stirs in man a determination to do better. But struggling only reveals the hopelessness of his predicament as does the struggling of a man caught in quicksand. The more he struggles to free himself, the deeper he drives himself into bondage.

7. The Law reveals the misery of sin but does not supply the power to overcome it (Romans 7:20-24). The Law has instructed the conscience against sin. The unconverted man has made a resolve to stop sinning, and he tries every conceivable method to do so. But because he cannot live up to his own goals or to the divine standard, he becomes a miserable wretch (Romans 7:24).

8. The Law is effective when it moves men to seek deliverance through Christ (Romans 7:24-25). The Law was full of typology pointing forward to Jesus' work of deliverance, because Christ was the end of the Law. A prominent aspect of early church evangelism was the use of the Law and the Prophets to convince the Jews that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Today's evangelism must also convince men of their need for deliverance from the bondage of sin. Then it must point them to Jesus as the only one who can provide that deliverance (Acts 4:12). The Saviour is ready to deliver from sin whenever man is ready to abandon his self-reformation efforts.

### **Important Teachings**

1. The Law was temporary (7:1-2).
2. The Law has been replaced by a better covenant and relationship (7:2-6).
3. The Law makes men aware of sin (7:7-13).
4. The Law provided sin-prone man with the divine standard of righteousness (7:12-14).

5. The Law fosters a hatred for sin (7:13).
6. The Law reveals that mere good intentions and self-effort will fail (7:14-19).
7. The Law reveals the misery of sin but does not supply the power to overcome it (7:20-24).
8. The Law is effective when it moves men to seek deliverance through Christ (7:24-25).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. *How does Paul's discussion of marriage illustrate the believer's experience?*

Marriage involves a commitment of a man and a woman to each other for as long as both shall live. The Old Testament Israelites were called to be faithful to the Law. When Christ came and fulfilled the Law, they were released from that Law and were free to commit themselves to a new, spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. *Contrast the phrases "newness of spirit" and "oldness of the letter" (7:6).*

Rigid adherence to the "letter" was an old concept to the Israelites. They feared, lest they should fail to keep all the details of the Law. Jesus' work and the coming of the Holy Spirit provided regeneration. Love is now the primary motivation for obedience, worship, and service.

3. *At what point in a person's life is he "alive without the law"?*

This is true of a child before the age of accountability. In dealing with those who were not raised in Christian homes, we must remember that the accountability level is not nearly as great as with those who grew up in Christian homes.

4. *What does the Law reveal about sin?*

The Law reveals what is sinful and what is holy (right from wrong). It reveals how terrible sin and its consequences are. The Law also reveals what man needs to do about his sin.

5. *How does verse 8 expose man's evil tendencies?*

It shows that our natural actions and reactions are generally the opposite of what they should be. The unregenerate person even has wrong motives for doing good things: "The plowing of the wicked is sin" (Proverbs 21:4).

6. *Of what significance is the frequent repetition of the words I and me*

*in these verses?*

Failure to claim victory often results from too much self-expression and too little self-denial. Our society's propensity to blame others, to blame the environment, or to blame one's natural tendencies is a rut we can easily fall into. Remember, I am my own worst enemy.

*7. To what extent may this struggle exist in the life of the Christian?*

This should not be accepted as normal Christian experience. We should expect continual conflict, but we can and should be consistently victorious. We must humbly help those who find themselves in a "Romans 7" experience and seek to lift the "feeble knees" on to the path of Romans 8 by God's grace.

*8. At what point does God deliver the wretched man (7:24)?* Deliverance comes when we are willing to die to the flesh and walk after the Spirit. In brokenness and contrition we must let the Spirit of grace lead us into freedom through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

We have seen in former lessons that justification is a gift from God. So is sanctification. It is only for those who stop struggling for victory in their own strength and who accept the power of Jesus Christ our Lord. Then the freedom of Romans 8 can become reality.

### **Research Guide**

Read Galatians 3 and Colossians 2 for a better understanding of God's purpose for the Law.