

LESSON 6

October 8, 2023

Unit II: Faith Triumphs, Law Fails

Finding Life and Freedom

DEVOTIONAL READING: Jeremiah 7:1-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 7:1-25

PRINT PASSAGE: Romans 7:1-12

KEY VERSE

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.

(Romans 7:6, KJV)

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Now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

(Romans 7:6, NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Better comprehend Paul's teachings concerning the role of God's laws in guiding our lives in the right direction.
- Listen to the Spirit's prompting of your conscience, convicting you of sin.
- Evaluate and renew your commitment to accepting God's guidelines for doing right.

*KEY TERMS

Belong to (verse 4)—Greek: *gameó* (gam-eh'-o): to get married; to give oneself in marriage; "be married to" (KJV).

Covet (verse 7)—Greek: *epithumeó* (ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o): desire; lust after; long for; set the heart upon.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

INTRODUCTION

Were you one of those teenagers who thought how great it would be when you no longer had to abide by the "law" your parents established in your home? Then you discovered that the world outside their domain was full of laws—those unavoidable dos and don'ts.



The Biblical Context

In Romans 6:1–8:39, Paul transitions from explaining the doctrine of justification (see Romans 3:20–5:21) to the practical application of salvation for those justified by faith in Jesus Christ. He specifically focuses on the doctrine of sanctification, God's work of producing righteousness in the believer. He begins his teaching by explaining that all whom God justifies will experience personal holiness despite their past. Then, anticipating dissenting questions from his Jewish readers about how the law relates to their faith in Christ and sanctification, Paul teaches what it means to be under grace and not the Law. In the printed text for this lesson, he explains what the Law cannot do for believers (see Romans 7:1-6) and its purpose in their lives (see Romans 7:7-14).

Even if you weren't in this group, obeying authority is problematic. We are not programmed to submit willingly to authority because of our sinful nature.

This nature motivates us to say, "Don't tell me what to do. I want to do what I want to do!" Regrettably, this rebellious attitude has also characterized humanity's attitude toward God. God established laws to govern humans' relationship with Him—but they disobeyed, often deliberately. After orchestrating Israel's release from Egyptian bondage, God gave them the Mosaic Law on Mount Sinai. These laws included the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, and multiple regulations for worship. God's purposes for giving them these laws were these: to reveal Himself to them; to protect their welfare; to set them apart; to show Himself to other nations; and to demonstrate humanity's need for a Savior. Initially, God intended the Mosaic Law to be a blessing for Israel, His chosen people (see Deuteronomy 5:29, 33). However, the nation failed to fulfill these purposes by choosing to disobey the Law and use it for its own reasons. By the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Jews had adopted

a legalistic notion that pleasing God meant living by the Law they could not keep, even after being exposed to the teaching of salvation by grace. Paul addresses this misconception in his letter to the Christians in Rome. In Romans 7, the apostle explained the Law's purpose and its inadequacies as it relates to salvation by faith in Christ alone.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

No Longer Bound (*Romans 7:1-6*)

KJV

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?

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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.

NIV

DO YOU not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?

2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.

3 So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

4 So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

5 For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.

6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Verses 1-6 continue Paul's discussion in Romans 6:15 and respond to the question "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" There, he used the analogy of a master and a servant to explain how believers should yield themselves to God. In this passage, he uses the marital relationship to illustrate the believer's connection to the Law because of the "marriage" to Jesus Christ. He begins by referring to those who have some knowledge of the Law—not a specific code of law, but to the principle true of all laws (**verse 1**). Whether Jewish, biblical, Roman, or Greek, the law only has dominion or jurisdiction over a lawbreaker as long as they live, no matter how severe or heinous the crime. In **verses 2-3**, Paul explains the point of **verse 1**. Although marriage is a lifelong relationship, the wife is bound to her husband only as long as he lives. If she leaves her husband for another man while he still lives, she becomes an adulteress. However, if her husband dies, she is freed from that law to become another man's wife without disgrace. Likewise, as death breaks the marriage bond, death to sin breaks the believer's relationship to the Law. In his application of this analogy, Paul reverses the situation.

It is the "wife" (believer) who dies and not the husband (the Law). The believer has died with Christ and is free from the Law because of this new union with Him. They can freely enjoy the benefits and responsibilities of a transformed life (**verse 4**). Before experiencing regeneration (living in the flesh), the prohibitions of the Law aroused sinful passions producing evil works leading to spiritual death (**verse 5**).

Now, because of this death-with-Christ and death-to-sin, believers are freed from the moral and spiritual liabilities and penalties under God's law (**verse 6**; see Galatians 3:13). This freedom is not from what the Law forbids, but release from condemnation and arousal to sin. Believers'

deliverance from the Law enables them to do what is right. It produces the Spirit-directed desire to do it. Believers remember that our freedom from the principles of the Law obligates us to obey God to an even greater degree now that we know Christ and are members of His family. **Verse 6** informs us that the motivation for obedience has changed; we no longer obey mechanically and externally, but internally from a heart transformed by the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Explain this principle: freedom from the law's liabilities and penalties is a privilege and a responsibility.

The Law's Value (*Romans 7:7-12*)

KJV

7 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.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

NIV

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.

9 Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.

10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

The Law reveals covetousness and a myriad of other sins (**verses 7-8**). Paul used his experience before salvation to explain how the Law ruins sinners (**verses 9-11**). As his understanding of the Law's requirements became clearer, he recognized his actual spiritual condition. Paul realized three significant truths: (1) He was spiritually dead despite his religious credentials; (2) striving to gain eternal life by keeping the Law was futile; and

(3) sin deceived him by leading him to believe that he could obtain spiritual life by keeping the Law.

Paul concluded that although the Law arouses, condemns sin, and brings death to sinners, it is not evil (**verse 12**). Instead, it is holy, just, and good—a reflection of God’s righteous character. The problem is not God’s moral standards but the tendency to sin within the believer that His standards arouse.

Striving to be a “good Christian” by keeping religious rules and regulations and doing good works is a path to spiritual deadness. Therefore, each believer must strive to develop and maintain an intimate, obedient relationship with Christ. This process leads to spiritual maturity, fruitfulness, and the desire to demonstrate loving obedience to His will.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In what ways is the church guilty of promoting legalism?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul explains that freedom from the Law does not free us to ignore its commandments. Instead, this freedom elevates us to a higher level of accountability for obeying and living out its principles. The Law’s purpose is to reveal sin and our inability to keep the Law perfectly and to show the need to accept Christ as our Savior. God’s law is a declaration of His will and a revelation of His character. While it does not produce holiness, its standards arouse the inherent sinful nature and should lead believers to self-examination and repentance as they strive to become more like Christ.

YOUR LIFE

God designed His laws to guide our lives in the right direction. Therefore, it is a non-negotiable necessity that believers become students of the Word to know and understand His guidelines for doing right. Commit to doing so if you are not already a regular participant in your church’s educational ministries. If you actively participate, commit to inviting others to do so as well. It is a matter of life and spiritual health.

YOUR WORLD!

The plethora of domestic violence, hate crimes, blatant immorality, political chicanery, systemic discrimination, and racism prove humanity’s innate sinful nature. These conditions challenge the church to reach others by teaching God’s laws. Then by demonstrating obedience, Christians can positively impact society and guide others to Christ for salvation and spiritual maturity.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for giving us Your law to reveal and convict us of sin. Now, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, we renew our commitment to using our freedom from its penalties

and liabilities to accept Your guidelines for doing right, reflect Your character, and draw fallen humanity to You for salvation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

As you prepare for next week's lesson, consider this question: "Why is having faith in Christ essential in having a relationship with Him?"

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, October 9	“The Lord Preserves the Faithful”	(Psalm 31:1-5, 19-24)
TUESDAY, October 10	““Your Faith Has Made You Well””	(Mark 10:46-52)
WEDNESDAY, October 11	““My Heart Trusts in God””	(Psalm 28)
THURSDAY, October 12	“The Gospel Sets Us Free”	(Acts 15:22-35)
FRIDAY, October 13	“God Demands Justice, Kindness, and Humility”	(Micah 6:1-8)
SATURDAY, October 14	“The Gospel for All People”	(Galatians 2:1-10)
SUNDAY, October 15	“We Are Justified in Christ”	(Galatians 2:11-21)

NOTES

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