



Epistle to The Romans



Lesson 8, Romans 7: Law School

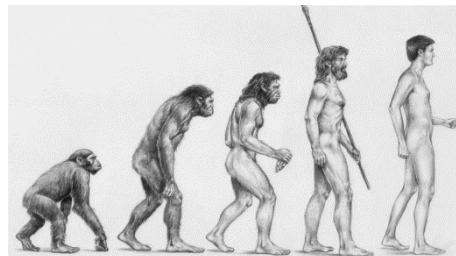
Review

- † Romans 1 Intro and background; Pagan Man
- † Romans 2 Moral Man; Religious Man
- † Romans 3 God's Greatest Problem
- † Romans 4 God's Greatest Gift
- † Romans 5 The Sequence to Maturity
- † Romans 6 Sin "Ain't gonna reign no more"
- † **Romans 7 Law School**

Myths of Our Time

It is a shock to realize how much of our modern culture is built on myths that are contrary to known truth. Dave Breese's book, *Seven Men Who Rule the World From Their Graves*, highlights the continuing impact of men like Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, et al. The Theory of Evolution goes far beyond biology and anthropology: it permeates our psychological concepts, our social concepts, and political philosophies.

The paradigm of the "Ascent of Man," that mankind evolves in an upward more positive direction, is built on the erroneous view of man as improving himself through education and technology. It assumes that man develops in response to his environment. It assumes that with the proper environment and education that one can change the fundamental nature of Man. Even in our courts of law, we excuse responsibility for crimes as the result of environmentally introduced factors.



This contradicts what the Scripture teaches us: "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9). The word for "Desperately wicked" could be translated 'incurably wicked.' The "Depravity of Man" is one of the most reluctantly accepted doctrines of a serious Bible student.

Parents know that you do not need to do anything to teach children to be bad; it comes naturally. It is teaching them to be good, that requires work!

Nowhere in Scripture is the heart of man cured. The miracle of regeneration is that we are given a new heart. The old one is incurable. This is what Romans 7 clarifies for us.

Ultimate Commentary

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Romans 15:4

In the above passage, Paul is talking about looking to, and appreciating, the Old Testament as a source of wisdom. Remember, in Paul's time the OT was the Bible. It is a tragedy today that many Christians are erroneously taught that the Old Testament was superseded by the New Testament.

The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.

Caveats

Two kinds of error that permeates some Christians today are:

- ① The Christian that has no grasp of the Old Testament at all.
- ② The Christians that discover the Old Testament and its Jewishness get so enamored with the OT that they crawl back under the law.

We want to seek a balance by learning the treasure of our heritage, and the patterns that teach us. For instance, to a Jew his catechism is his calendar. To really understand the whole Bible a Christian must understand how the calendar work, the feasts etc... However, beware the lure of legalism which was addressed at The Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. It was not necessary to become under the law for salvation. The law does not save anyone. Paul has taught us that Christians are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. Remember, Abraham was saved before he was circumcised, and before the law was given...again see Romans 3:20 and 3:28.



The Law

The Mosaic Law is where many Christians go to try to find Christian living (Ten commandments, etc...). View the law as a chain, you break one link and it fails to hold you up. Paul is going to show that the Mosaic Law has no claim on the believer. Actually, the Law condemned man to die; it was a ministration of condemnation (2 Cor 3:9).



You don't contact the judge who sentenced you to die and ask him how you are going to live!

There is tremendous knowledge to be gained in the Messianic movement, but you need to be on guard as various publishers and authors try to get you to keep the Torah or follow other laws like worshipping on certain days. Paul says, "*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*" Colossians 2:16. Worship whenever you want to worship, but you are not keeping the law.

The Burden of the Law

Stephen, before the Sanhedrin, said that they had "... received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7:53). Peter calls it a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

Paul said in the last chapter, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace”* Romans 6:14. Paul is now going to elaborate on what that means.

Read Romans 7 verse 1

The statement that a believer identified with Jesus Christ in His death is no longer “under Law” (6:14) should not have surprised Paul’s readers because the people he was speaking to knew the law, they were steeped in it.

This statement should not be restricted to Jewish believers in the church at Rome because Gentiles also knew the principle that the Law has authority (cf. Rom 6:9; 14) over a man only as long as he lives. This is a self-evident truth, which Paul then illustrated by marriage, an allegorical example. Note that Paul is not giving us instructions on divorce and remarriage in the next few passages, he is using it as an allegory based on commonly known Jewish law; he instructs us on marital issues elsewhere.

Read Romans 7 verse 2

A married woman or bound to a woman, is bound or “has been bound and stands bound” to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is released meaning “has been and stands discharged” from the law of marriage or “from the law of the man.”



In other words, she is bound to him by marriage while he lives, and obviously his death frees her from that marriage.

Read Romans 7 verse 3

Paul continues the illustration, pointing out that if a wife marries or “if she comes to” another man while her husband is still alive, she is called or “shall be publicly known as” an adulteress. Conversely, on the death of her husband she is free from that marriage (cf. 7:2). So, she is not an adulteress if she marries or “even though she comes to”) another man. A widow who marries again is not guilty of adultery.

Note: The Mosaic Law had no provision for a married woman to get a divorce. Thus, she is a “type” of the believer. Marriages were arranged; the woman had no choice...a loveless obligation... This leads to a most provocative metaphorical application:

Read Romans 7 verse 4

Paul is speaking of the believer or Christian as the “Bride of Christ.” In this case, who are the “adulterers”? In Christ, those who keep the _____ are “adulterers”! In other words, if you are in Christ, trying to keep the law, you are an adulterer! You are dead to the law. This is the key insight in the Book of Romans. Paul applies his illustration of marriage to the believer and the Law, an allegorical example: the first husband which you, the bride is bound to, is the Adamic nature, the fallen nature; the second husband is Christ (the hero of the piece...), which frees you from the law.

Dead to the Law

Paul also says that you also died (lit., “you were put to death,” as was true of Jesus) to the Law. Just as a believer “died to sin” (6:2) and so is “set free from sin” (6:18, 22), so he also died to the Law and is separated and set free from it (6:14; cf. Gal 2:19). As a wife is no longer married to her husband when he dies, so a Christian is no longer under the Law.



This separation was through the body of Christ, that is, because of Christ’s death on the cross. As a result, Christians belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead (cf. Rom 6:4, 9). Believers are, indeed, united to Him as His Bride (Eph 5:25).

God’s purpose in all this is “that we might bear fruit to God “ (cf. Rom 6:22; Gal 5:22-23; Phil 1:11). Only a person who is spiritually alive can bear spiritual fruit, that is, holy living (cf. Jn 15:4-5). A person who is married to Christ should also bear spiritual fruit.

Paul now at verse 5 changes pronounced. He moves from the second person plural (“you”), speaking logically, to the first-person plural (“we”), speaking personally and includes himself along with his readers.

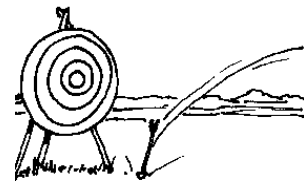
Read Romans 7 verse 5

Paul continues by saying “...were in the flesh,” meaning constantly in the flesh. The phrase “while we were in” means being under the domination of self or dominated by our sin nature; (cf. Rom 7:18, 25). The sinful passions aroused by the Law were at work in our bodies. This describes a believer before he was saved (cf. Rom 6:19). The Law, by its prohibitions, aroused sinful passions, as will be explained in Rom 7:7-13.

Sin, Paul repeatedly affirmed, leads to death (Rom 5:15, 17, 21; 6:16, 21, 23; 7:10-11, 13; 8:2, 6, 10, 13). The law energized our rebellion and cannot bring us into a righteous life. A good analogy would be telling a child not to touch a hot stove- that warning (the law) will give some children the knowledge or the drive to actually touch it! The law can only demonstrate our sinful nature and cannot save us. If you understand this passage you will understand what many people, past and present, have not been able to grasp: **What is the purpose of the law of God?**

Ask yourself this, does knowing the law make us behave better? By looking around us, we see that it doesn’t work. Again, the law does not save us but points out our need for salvation.

Many people find it strange that Paul implies in Verse 5 that the law was given to man that sin might increase. Is that what he said!? Yes. This strange thought echoes in different areas of Romans: The law makes us sin more, which then, in-turn, at some point, reveals our sin nature. Subsequently we realize by our own effort we can’t make it. Even through religion, which is man’s attempt to reconcile himself with God, can’t make it.



Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: Romans 5:20

This strange thought echoes throughout Romans. The law was given so that sin might increase. Paul is going to discuss this in more depth.

Read Romans 7 verse 6

The word “Delivered” in this verse means released from or unshackled. We are ‘unshackled’ from the dominion of sin. That does not mean we won’t ever sin, but when we do sin, it is a choice. The unsaved don’t have a choice.

“Held” here means to be constantly bound by. But now, being identified with Christ, believers are dead to the Law. Like the widow released from marital obligations, so believers are released from the Law and its arousal to sin.

“So that we serve” means that constantly serve. So, the purpose of this release “from the Law” is so that we may serve or better, “be slaves” (bond slaves ‘doulos’) in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Letter vs. Spirit

Letter

Depends on the flesh (Rom 8:3)

Produces rebellion (Rom 7:8)

Results in more sin (Rom 5:20)

Brings wrath (Rom 4:15)

Not of faith (Gal 3:12)

Kills (2 Cor 3:4-6; Gal 3:21)

Spirit

Depends upon God’s power (Lk 23:49; Acts 1:8)

Produces God’s desires (Phil 2:13)

Righteousness (Rom 8:4)

Brings joy, peace, production (Gal 5:22, 23)

By faith (Gal 5:5; 2 Cor 5:7)

Gives life... (Phil 2:12-13).

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

‘Work out’ in the above passage means to work to the outside from the result that is already on the inside.

Why was the law given?

- 1) The Law was given to expose our sin nature (Rom 7:7) (like a mirror).
- 2) To incite the sin nature to sin more (Rom 7:8-23); sin nature cannot be reformed.
- 3) To drive us to despair of self-effort (Rom 7:24, 25)(self-striving is doomed to failure).
- 4) To drive us to dependence upon the Holy Spirit alone (Rom 8:1-4).

These four points must be experienced before you can continue in the Spirit. The involvement of the Mosaic Law in the discussion of a believer's identification with Christ and death to sin raises a question about the Law's relationship to sin:

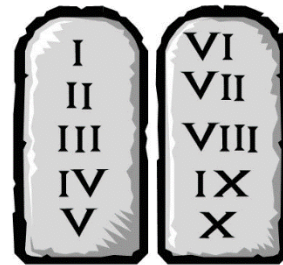
Read Romans 7 verse 7

God forbid, or "May it never be!" That which reveals sin cannot be sin. The mirror isn't ugly, what it reveals is ugly. "Sin" is singular and means the sin nature not a specific sin. "Known sin" in this verse means to get a knowledge of sin. Paul's example for himself stated here, is that he did not know that his desire for what is forbidden (lust, coveting) was wrong, lest it was revealed to him by the law.

The Law arouses sin (7:5) but that does not mean the Law itself is sin. In fact, Paul said later, the Law is holy (v. 12) and spiritual (v. 14). Paul went on to explain that the Law made sin known (cf. 3:19-20).

Exodus 20: The 10 Commandments

- 1) v.3 No other gods before me
- 2) v.4 No graven image
- 3) v.7 Do not take God's Name in vain
- 4) v.8 Remember the Sabbath
- 5) v.12 Honor father and mother
- 6) v.13 Do not murder
- 7) v.14 Do not commit adultery
- 8) v.15 Do not steal
- 9) v.16 Do not be a false witness
- 10) v.17 Do not desire the unavailable (covet)



This last commandment is different; it has a unique character whose intent is internal. This is the one that the Holy Spirit used to get Paul as mentioned above. (Cf. Paul's performance under the law: Phil 3:4ff.)

The Law's prohibition, "Do not covet" (Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21), makes people want to covet all the more. Paul knew sin as a principle and specifically, covetousness as an expression of it, and that knowledge came through the Law.

Do you keep the ten commandments? Or, do you obey the Sermon on the Mount?" or basically the Law as God sees it? It is scary stuff to try and live by the letter of the law AND you can't miss one point, or you have broken the law! James 2:10; Gal 3:10!!

The Christian life isn't difficult; it is impossible.

Some people who try to live by the law follow it better than others. But even so, it is still not good enough.

Read Romans 7 verse 8

The word “dead” here means dormant. Paul described how it worked. The indwelling principle of sin, seizing the opportunity or “taking occasion,” a starting point so to speak, “in me”, talking about himself and as a believer!

The word in verse 8, ‘Occasion’ means a place from which a movement or attack is made, a base of operations. It is a military term. In other words, that is what sin is doing by the commandment. Afforded by the commandment (cf. Rom 7:11), sin produced in Paul every kind of covetous desire(concupiscence).

It is significant that, beginning with verse 7 and continuing through this chapter, the Apostle Paul turned to the first person singular, presenting his personal experience. Up to this point he had used the third person, the second person, and even the first-person plural. But now he described his own experience, allowing the Holy Spirit to apply the truth to his readers.

The Law is not the cause of the act of sin; the principle or nature of sin within an individual is. But the Law’s specific commandments stimulate the sin principle into acts that violate the commandments and give those acts the character of transgression (Rom 4:15; cf. 3:20; 5:13b, 20a).

As Paul concluded, “Apart from Law, sin is dead.” This does not mean that sin has no existence without the Law (Rom 5:13), but that without the Law sin is less active, for the Law arouses “sinful passions” (7:5).

Read Romans 7 verse 9

What on earth is Paul talking about here. When was this? When he reached the age of accountability. This is one of the verses that is used for the understanding that small children are saved, before the age of accountability [See also 2 Sam 12:15-23].

“Alive once” means as a youth prior to his awareness and understanding of the full impact of God’s commandments. The clause, “but when the commandment came,” does not speak of the giving of the Mosaic Law, but the dawning of the significance or awareness of the commandment (“Do not covet”) on Paul’s mind and heart before his conversion. The result was that the principle of sin within made its presence and power known (it sprang to life) in his violations of the commandment. As a result, Paul died (metaphorically separated from fellowship) spiritually (cf. 6:23a) under the sentence of judgment by the Law he had broken. The law unveils the sin nature; and implies accountability.

Read Romans 7 verses 10 & 11

Paul then understood. Apart from the Law, the principle of sin was dormant and inactive; but using the commandments of the Law, it demonstrated its controlling force over one’s actions. So, this sin “deceived” him [“led him astray”; cf. 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14]] and put him to death (lit., “killed” him), not physically but spiritually.

How did it deceive him? By luring him to attempt to live for God by his own effort...

Read Romans 7 verse 12

The law is designed to show my helplessness. Paul continues to explore the paradox...

Read Romans 7 verse 13

It is the sin nature—revealed by our inability to keep the law—that is our enemy within.. “That by the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.” That is, undeniable.

Myth: Man is a result of his environment. Truth: He is unreformable and “incurably wicked...” Even the Believer can’t keep the law; no smoking, no dancing, etc... Trying to keep codes stimulates the old nature, and rebellion...

Read Romans 7 verse 14

“I am, Paul is speaking in 1st person. Understanding the conflict in personal sanctification involves seeing the relationship between a believer and his indwelling sin. In verse 14, Paul makes a transition from the previous subject (vv. 7-13) to the next one.



The statement, “The Law is spiritual” (cf. v. 12), is not only the conclusion of Paul’s previous argument but also an accepted fact among people. The Law comes from God who is Spirit (Jn 4:24) and expresses God’s will for human living.

Paul, using himself as the example, said the problem is that “I am carnal” or unspiritual. Using the present tense Paul does not mean that he once was carnal, but it is a continual state of being carnal. In addition, he was sold as a slave or “had been sold and remained in that state” of being under sin (Rom 3:9).

The clause, “sold under sin” describes an unregenerate person; but sin also resides in a believer, who is still subject to sin’s penalty of physical death. As a result, indwelling sin continues to seek to claim what it considers its property even after one has become a Christian.

Sin Deceived Him

Three Categories of People:

- 1) The Natural Man Lost (1 Cor 2, 3; Rom 1-3)
- 2) The Carnal Man Saved but undelivered (1 Cor 3, Rom 8)
- 3) The Spiritual Man

Here Paul is dealing with believers. They are alive, dead to the law, but still defeated because they are trying to keep the Law under their own strength.. The only way to keep the Law of God is by the Holy Spirit!

In relating his personal experience in Rom 7:14-25, Paul consistently will use the present tense where he is describing his present conflict as a Christian with indwelling sin and its continuing efforts to control his daily life.

Read Romans 7 verse 15

“For I am constantly not practicing what I would like to do, but I keep on doing that which I hate.” Yet, this is the guy that God selected to write 14 epistles; who, in one lifetime brought the Gospel to the outer limits of the Roman Empire; Talk about dedication and commitment... And yet in utter despair...and yet out of this comes these letters of victory.

Read Romans 7 verse 16

This is a key insight, contrary to all human nature: despite this paradox, “I agree with the law that it is good and right.”

Read Romans 7 verse 17

This does not mean Paul was avoiding personal responsibility for his actions; he was speaking of the conflict between his desires and the sin within him. It is not, “The devil made me do it.”

First of ray of hope: This is not the new nature, the problem is the old nature. Another key insight.

Read Romans 7 verses 18 & 19

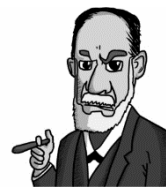
Note the qualifying phrase is verse 18, “in my flesh” (old self). “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (cf. Mt 26:41).

Verse 19 uses all present tense verbs meaning a constant action.

Read Romans 7 verse 20

A restatement of v.17, but with a further insight. The source of sin is the old nature. Paul now, as we often have as a small child, in candor and honesty, admits he doesn’t understand his own behavior.

Paul recognized that even as a believer he had an indwelling principle of sin that once owned him as a slave and that still expressed itself through him to do things he did not want to do and not to do things he desired to do. This is a problem common to all believers. If Sigmund Freud could only have known this, we could empty the psychiatric clinics... Psychology can only deal with symptoms such as guilt, rather than its cause: sin.



Read Romans 7 verse 21

Here (and also in 8:2, the word “law” means principle. This law or principle is the reality of ever-present evil in an individual whenever he wants to do good.

Read Romans 7 verse 22

The “inward man” a term Paul uses in the Corinthians letter and the and Ephesians letter. Delight in God’s Law was the psalmist’s response, stated repeatedly in Psalm 119 (e.g., vv. 16, 24, 47; cf. Ps 1:2). Because of regeneration, a believer has a new nature or capacity for loving spiritual truths. The real You...The real you wants to succeed and God gives you the power to do so.

Read Romans 7 verse 23

Recognizing the facts of experience, Paul said he saw another law or principle at work within him. This is the principle of sin. Paul called it “sin living in me” (Rom. 7:17, 20), “evil is present with me” (v. 21), and “the sinful nature” (vv. 5, 18, 25).

The indwelling principle of sin is constantly mounting a military campaign against the new nature, trying to gain victory and control of a believer and his actions.

The new nature is called “the law” of the “mind” because it has the capacity for perceiving and making moral judgments.

Further, despite a believer’s identification with Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection and his efforts to have Christ-honoring attitudes and actions, he cannot in his own power resist his indwelling sin nature. In and of himself he repeatedly experiences defeat and frustration [This will be dealt with in Romans 12.]

Read Romans 7 verse 24

Significantly Paul’s description of himself is part of John’s picture of the church of Laodicea: “wretched” (Rev. 3:17). This is a saved man. The word wretched carries with it the note of exhaustion because of the struggle. “Who is going to deliver me?” He is helpless.

Paul recognized that as long as he was in his mortal body, he would face the conflict with the indwelling sin principle and would have defeat in his own strength. Here he wrote of the “body of death”; in Romans 6:6 he wrote of the “body of sin.” These mean that sin works through one’s human body (cf. Rom 6:6, 12-13, 19; 7:5, 23), bringing death (Rom 6:16, 21, 23; 7:10-11, 13; 8:10).

Read Romans 7 verse 25

Paul’s answer to this question was triumphant and immediate! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Just as believers are identified with Him in His death and resurrection by faith here and now, so they will join their resurrected and exalted Lord for all eternity in new bodies, free forever from the presence of sin (8:23; Phil 3:20-21).

“I myself serve” means “am serving as a slave” the law of God”; but with the flesh or “sinful nature” a slave to the law of sin.

While awaiting freedom from the presence of sin, believers still face conflicts between their regenerated minds (or new natures or capacities) and their sin natures or capacities.

Run, run and do, the Law commands

But gives me neither feet nor hands.

Better news the Gospel brings,

It bids me fly and gives me wings. J. Vernon McGee

Next Session: Read Chapter 8. One of the greatest chapters in the New Testament.