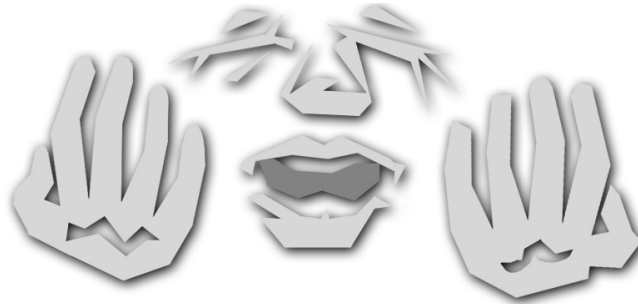


The Man of Romans 7



SABBATH—AUGUST 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 7.

MEMORY VERSE: “But now we have died to what used to control us. We have been set free from the law. Now we serve in the new way of the Holy Spirit. We no longer serve in the old way of the written law” (Romans 7:6, NlrV).

FEW CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE HAVE CREATED MORE DISAGREEMENT AND ARGUMENT THAN ROMANS 7 HAS. *The SDA Bible Commentary* says, “The meaning of verses 14–25 has been one of the most discussed problems in the whole letter of Romans. The main question has been whether Paul was writing about his own personal struggle with sin. If this were true, the argument is about whether Paul’s experience happened before or after he was saved! In their most simple meaning, Paul’s words [verses 7–11] clearly seem to speak of his own personal struggle with sin. [Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 19; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies¹ for the Church*, volume 3, page 475.] It is also true that Paul is describing a struggle that every soul experiences when he or she becomes aware of God’s holy law.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 553.

Bible students do not agree on whether Romans 7 was Paul’s experience before or after conversion.² But what is more important is that the righteousness (holy life) of Jesus covers us. In His righteousness we also stand perfect before God, who promises to make us holy, to give us victory³ over sin, and to make us in “the image [likeness] of his Son” (Romans 8:29, KJV). These are the important points for us to know and experience as we work to spread “the everlasting gospel”⁴ to “every nation, tribe, language, and people” (Revelation 14:6, NlrV).

1. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

2. conversion—the time when a person fully believes in Jesus and decides to turn his or her life around, doing away with sinful habits completely.

3. victory—the act of winning the battle over, or winning the struggle against, something, such as sin.

4. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 15**TIED TO THE LAW?****(Romans 7:16)**

What example does Paul use in Romans 7:1–6 to show his readers their relationship to the law? What point is he making with this example?

Paul's example in Romans 7:1–6 may seem hard to understand at first. But a careful study of the verses will help us to understand what he means.

The letter seems to show that Paul was dealing with the system⁵ of worship started by God at Sinai. That is often what Paul means by the word *law*. The Jews had a hard time understanding the fact that this system, which was given to them by God, would come to an end with the coming of the Messiah. In other words, there would be no more need for the system after Jesus died and rose again. The Jewish believers were still not ready to give up such an important part of their lives.

Paul's example was as follows: a woman is married to a man. She is connected to him by law as long as he lives. During his lifetime she cannot go with other men. But when he dies, she is free from the law that tied her to him (verse 3).

How does Paul use this idea of the law of marriage to explain the Jewish system of religion? Read Romans 7:4, 5.

The death of her husband frees the woman from the law of her husband. In the same way, through Jesus Christ, the death of the old life in the flesh frees the Jews from the law. The Jews were expected to keep the law until the Messiah came to fulfill its purpose.

Now the Jews were free to “remarry.” They were invited to marry the risen Messiah. And they were to bring forth fruit to God. This example was one more tool Paul used to help the Jews understand that they were now free to give up the old Jewish system.

Again, Paul and the Bible have given strong arguments in support of obeying the Ten Commandments. So, it does not make sense to say that Paul was telling these Jewish believers that the Ten Commandments were not law anymore. Those who use these verses to try to make this point really do not want to make that point. What they really want to say is that only the seventh-day Sabbath is removed, not the rest



Through Jesus, the Jews were freed from the law to “remarry” the risen Messiah.

5. system—a set of beliefs and practices.

of the law. To say that these verses mean that the fourth commandment no longer matters is to give these verses a meaning that Paul never planned to give.

MONDAY—AUGUST 16

IS THE LAW SIN? (Romans 7:8–11)

If Paul is talking about the whole law system at Sinai, what about Romans 7:7? In Romans 7:7, Paul is talking about one of the Ten Commandments. Does that mean that Paul was talking about the removal of the entire Ten Commandments?

The answer is No. We must remember that the word *law* for Paul means the whole system introduced at Sinai. It also included God's law but was not limited to it. So, Paul could quote from it and from any other part of the whole Jewish economy⁶ to make his points. But when the system passed away at the death of Christ, that passing did not include God's law. This law was good before Sinai, and it was still good after the Cross.

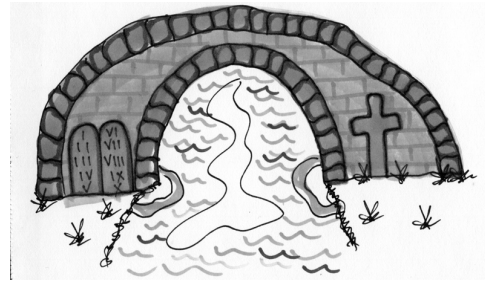
Read Romans 7:8–11. What is Paul saying about the relationship between the law and sin?

God showed Himself to the Jews. He explained to them carefully about what was right and what was wrong

in all kinds of laws covering religion, government, and health. God also explained the penalties (prices to be paid) for breaking the different laws. Breaking God's will (plan for our lives) is described as sin.

Paul explains he would not have known it was a sin to covet⁷ if he did not know the "law." If a sinner disobeys God's will without really knowing what God's will is, then he or she is not guilty of sin. When a person understands what God's will is, he or she begins to understand that he or she is a sinner. He or she also understands that he or she is judged guilty and deserves to die. In this sense, the person dies.

In Romans, Paul is trying to build a bridge to better understanding. He wants the Jews, who think very highly of the "law," to understand that Christ fulfilled the whole law. Paul is showing that the law was necessary. But what the law could do was limited. The law was meant to show the need of salvation.⁸ The law never was meant to be the way people would get that salvation.



In the letter to Romans, Paul builds a bridge for the Jews between the law and Christ.

6. Jewish economy—the offering of the blood of animals by the Jewish priests for the sins of the people. The blood that was shed represented (showed) Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this system (set of beliefs and practices) was not needed.

7. covet—to want another person's things.

8. salvation—God's plan of saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved from sin or evil.

“The apostle Paul is sharing his experience. He is doing this to teach an important truth about the work of becoming converted.⁹ Paul writes, ‘Before I knew about the law, I was alive.’ He did not feel he had any guilt. ‘But then the commandment came.’ This happened when the law of God became part of Paul’s heart and mind. Then ‘sin came to life, and I died’ (Romans 7:9, NIV). Then Paul knew he was judged guilty by God’s law. Be aware that it was Paul, and not the law, that died.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1076.

In what sense have you “died” before the law? How does Romans 7 help you understand what Jesus has done for you by giving you a new life in Him?

TUESDAY—AUGUST 17

THE HOLY LAW (Romans 7:12)

How do we understand Romans 7:12 based on what Paul has been discussing?

The Jews thought very highly of the law. So, Paul honors it in every way possible. The law is good for what it does. But it cannot do what it was never meant to do. The law was not meant to save us from sin. For that we need Jesus. This is because the law cannot bring salvation. Only Jesus and His righteousness (holy life), which comes to us by faith, can.

9. converted—to have become a disciple (follower) of God; born again.

10. character—who God is; God’s Ten Commandments show us who He is.



The law was never meant to save us from sin. Only Jesus can do that.

Whom does Paul blame for his condition of “death” in Romans 7:13? And what does he excuse? Why is that difference important?

In this verse, Paul is presenting the “law” in the best way possible. He chooses to blame sin, not the law, for his terrible, sinful condition. This condition is caused by his doing “all manner [kinds] of concupiscence [lust; desires]” (Romans 7:8). The law is good because it is God’s standard (rule) of character.¹⁰ But as a sinner, Paul was judged guilty by the law.

According to Romans 7:14, 15, why was sin so successful in revealing (showing) Paul as a terrible sinner?

Carnal means having to do with the flesh. Paul needed Jesus Christ because only Jesus Christ could take away the guilt of sin (Romans 8:1). Only Jesus Christ could free Paul from slavery to sin.

Paul describes himself as “sold under sin.” He is a slave to sin. He has no freedom. He cannot do what he wants to do. He tries to do what the good law tells him to do, but sin will not let him.

By this example, Paul was trying to show the Jews his need of the Messiah. Paul already had pointed out that victory is possible only under grace¹¹ (Romans 6:14). This same thought is given again in Romans 7. Living under the “law” means being a slave to sin, a merciless (without kindness) boss.

What has been your experience with how sin makes you a slave? Have you ever tried to play with sin? Have you thought you could control it as you wished? Did you find yourself under a cruel and merciless boss instead? Welcome to real life! Why then must you surrender¹² to Jesus and die to self every day?

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 18

THE MAN OF ROMANS 7 (Romans 7:16, 17)

The Holy Spirit uses the law as a mirror. The Holy Spirit helps a person believe that he or she is displeasing God by not obeying the law. By working hard to obey the law, the sinner shows that he or she agrees that the law is good.



The Holy Spirit uses the law as a mirror.

In Romans 7:18–20, what important points did Paul remind his readers of?

To help a person better understand his or her need of Christ, the Holy Spirit often leads the person through an “old covenant”¹³ kind of experience. Ellen G. White describes Israel’s experience this way: “The people did not understand the sinfulness of their own hearts. Feeling that they were able to be saved through their own righteousness, the people said, ‘We will do everything the Lord has told us to do. We will obey him.’ Exodus 24:7 [NIV]. . . . Only a few weeks passed before the people broke their covenant with God. They bowed down to worship an idol. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken. And now the people saw their sinfulness and their need of pardon [forgiveness]. They

11. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness that is not deserved) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

12. surrender—giving one’s whole life to Jesus to love and to serve Him and to obey His law.

13. covenant—a promise or agreement between God and His people. If the people obeyed God, God would bless them.

were brought to feel their need of the Savior shown in God's promise made to Abraham."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,¹⁴ pages 371, 372.

Sadly, many Christians fail to renew their lives in Christ daily. They think that Romans 7 tells them that it is impossible to ever do right. But really this chapter is saying that it is impossible to do right when a person is a slave to sin. But victory is possible in Jesus Christ.

Are you having the victories over self and sin that Christ promises us? If not, why not? What wrong choices are you making?

THURSDAY—AUGUST 19

RESCUED (SAVED) FROM DEATH (Romans 7:21–23)

Read Romans 7:21–23. How have you experienced this same struggle in your own life, even as a Christian?

In these verses, Paul compares¹⁵ the law in his body to the law of sin. "With the flesh," Paul says, he served "the law of sin" (Romans 7:25). But serving sin and obeying its law means death (read verses 10, 11, 13). Paul's body was now working to obey sin. So, his body could be described as "the body of this death."

The law of the mind is God's law. It is the way God makes known His will to us. With the leading of the Holy Spirit, Paul accepted this law. His mind was determined to keep it. But when he tried, he could not. This was because his body wanted to sin. Who has not felt that same struggle? In your mind you know what you want to do, but your flesh wants something else.

According to Romans 7:24, 25, how can we be rescued from this difficult situation that traps us?

Some have wondered why, after giving such glorious¹⁶ praise, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Paul should speak again about the struggles of the soul from which he had been saved. Some understand this as a short prayer of thanksgiving. They believe that this praise naturally follows the cry, "Who shall deliver?" in Romans 7:24. This is just before Paul begins a long discussion of the glorious freedom in Romans 8. Paul sums up what he said in the earlier verses and talks again about the struggle against the forces of sin.

Others suggest that by "I myself," Paul means, "left to myself, leaving Christ out of the picture." No matter how we understand these verses, one point should remain clear: left to ourselves, without Christ, we are helpless against sin. Christ gives us a new life in Him. In this new life, the

14. patriarchs and prophets—prophets were leaders of God's people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are spokespersons for God.

15. compares—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

16. glorious—having, or given, great beauty, praise, and honor.

old self still may arise from time to time. But the promises of victory are ours if we choose to claim them.

FRIDAY—AUGUST 20

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Perfect Law,” pages 212–215; “A Divine [Godly] Sin Bearer,” pages 308–310, in *Selected Messages*, book 1; “Healing of the Soul,” pages 84, 85; “The Importance of Seeking True Knowledge,” pages 452–454, in *The Ministry [Work Done for God] of Healing*; “Christ’s Victory as Complete as Adam’s Failure,” page 323, in *My Life Today*.

“There is no safety nor peace nor goodness in breaking God’s law. Man cannot hope to stand innocent before God, and at peace with Him through Christ’s pardon [forgiveness], while he continues in sin.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 213.

“After Christ died on the cross as a sin offering, the ceremonial law¹⁷ was meaningless. But it still was connected with God’s law, and it was glorious. The whole thing had God’s approval. It showed the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God. And if the old sanctuary services¹⁸ were glorious, then how much more glorious would Christ be when He came to give His holy, life-giving Spirit to all

who believe.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1095.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Who do you think the man of Romans 7 is? Is it Paul before or after his conversion? Or is this chapter talking about something else? What reasons can you give for your answer? In class discuss the answers given.
- ② How do we explain the fact that even baptized,¹⁹ born-again Christians struggle with sin? Do we have to overcome everything at once? Or will we always be sinning? Or is the answer somewhere in between?
- ③ What are some possible dangers if we, as Christians, think we will always be sinning, always be falling, always be breaking God’s law, no matter what? On the other hand, what are some dangers we face if we think that as Christians we must overcome every wrong thing in our lives, every wrong thought, every wrong action, no matter what, before we can become saved?
- ④ In the end, no matter what people decide on “the man of Romans 7,” what promises can we take from Romans 7 for ourselves that will help us understand what it means to be followers of Jesus?

17. ceremonial law—the law dealing with the sanctuary (the house where God was worshiped by the Jews in Bible times). The sanctuary services helped the Jews to better understand God’s plan for saving them from sin.

18. sanctuary services—the offerings of animal blood given as a payment for sin. The animal blood was offered in place of the sinner’s blood. This service represented (showed) Jesus’ death on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, these services were not needed.

19. baptized—to be put completely under water and brought back up out of it. This shows that Jesus has forgiven this person’s sins and has given him or her a new life.