

**ADULT UNIT II: Faith Triumphs, Law Fails**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: The Law Reveals Sin**  
**ADULT TOPIC: Finding Life and Freedom**

**LESSON 6**

**DATE: October 8, 2023**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Jeremiah 7:1-15**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 7:1-25**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Romans 7:1-12**

**Home Daily Bible Reading**

Oct. 2	M	Deuteronomy 5:1-15	<i>Living Before God</i>
Oct. 3	T	Deuteronomy 5:16-22	<i>Living with Others</i>
Oct. 4	W	Romans 7:14-25	<i>Who Will Rescue Me?</i>
Oct. 5	Th	Jeremiah 7:1-15	<i>Outward Piety Earns God's Wrath</i>
Oct. 6	F	Romans 6:1-12	<i>Dead to Sin; Alive in Christ</i>
Oct. 7	Sa	Romans 6:13-23	<i>Present Your Bodies to God</i>
Oct. 8	Su	Romans 7:1-13	<i>Dead to the Law Through Christ</i>

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Learner

**Celebration** – “At the Cross” - #153 AME Zion *Bicentennial Hymnal*

**Declaration** – Romans 7:1-12 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

**An Analogy from Marriage**

<sup>1</sup> Or 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? <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she belongs to another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she belongs to another man, she is not an adulteress.

<sup>4</sup> In the same way, my brothers and sisters, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.

<sup>5</sup> For 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. <sup>6</sup> But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are enslaved in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the written code.

### The Law and Sin

<sup>7</sup> What then are we to 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."

<sup>8</sup> But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law sin lies dead. <sup>9</sup> I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived <sup>10</sup> and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. <sup>11</sup> For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. <sup>12</sup> So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

**Affirmation** – We will evaluate and renew our commitment to accepting God's guidelines for doing right. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

### ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Laws are created for the mutual benefit of society, to give clear guidelines for "right" and "wrong." Why do some people insist on breaking the law? In Romans, Paul wrestles with the reality that while God's law guides us to do right, sin uses that very same law to bring disobedience and death. Break into small groups and discuss the following issues and questions:

1. What is your understanding of freedom in relation to the law? What happens, for instance, when we ignore or deny the law? What do we mean when we say no one is above the law? Is this true in the practical social context of people in different upper and lower classes and the like?
2. Are things that cut and dried that we can operate based on classifying behaviors as good or bad, right, or wrong, ignoring the fact that life is not always so clear cut?
3. What part does conscience play in our determination of right and wrong?
4. The reality of physical death is always before us, but what about spiritual death? Is there such a thing as spiritual death? If so, what is it?

### EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

**Romans 7:1-3:** Paul begins with an analogy drawn from conventional views on marriage. Although his analogy may not be entirely clear when he speaks of the



husband dying rather than the wife, we can still make out his intended meaning. His point is that a marriage covenant was no longer binding after the death of a spouse. Similarly, he wants it made clear that one is no longer bound to the law once one participates in the death and resurrection of Christ. "Because the 'marriage' with the law was broken by death, the believer is not an adulteress and cannot be condemned by the law. The believer dies through being united with

Christ in His death, breaking the chain of disobedience and death that bound the sinner together with Adam in his destiny (5:12–21). The other side of the illustration is that union with Christ in His resurrection gives the believer a new relationship, in which a true, if not yet perfect, obedience is offered to God in love and gratitude" (*The ESV Reformation Study Bible*).

**Romans 7:4–8:** Again, Paul's analogy and explanations regarding sin and the law needs quite a bit of unraveling. "7:7 That the law is sin? Paul's allusions to the law thus far have been negative in tone, especially his statement that the law arouses sinful passions (v. 5). Now he explains that recognizing the negative effect the law had on the life of fallen humanity is not a devaluation of the law itself (note the vehement language in 3:31). The God-ordained role of the law in a fallen world is to reveal the nature of human sin. The law not only defines sin, but acts as a catalyst, provoking the precise sinful reactions that it forbids and condemns (vv. 8–11)" (*Ibid.*). "7:8 sin lies dead. In the sense that either sin or its real offensiveness was not recognized" (*Ibid.*). Paul contrasts the old life "in the flesh" with "the new life of the Spirit" (v. 6). However, the Greek word for "flesh" (*sarx*) is not identical to the Greek word for "body" (*soma*), so we should not assume that Paul sees the body as sinful in contrast to the pure spirit or soul. Indeed, Paul elsewhere speaks of a "spiritual body" (*soma*) (1 Corinthians 15:44). Paul simply uses the phrase "in the flesh" (*sarx*) to connote life lived in slavery to sin.

**Romans 7:9–12:** "In itself the law, which brings us to know the reality of sin in our moral and spiritual system (3:20; 5:13, 20), is 'holy and righteous and good' (v. 12). The law is a faithful revelation of what is right or wrong and does not lose its validity to measure and direct our moral behavior. 7:9 I was once alive apart from the law... I died. He was alive, not in the sense of having spiritual life (6:11), but in his own estimation. Knowing the law, which promised life for obedience (v. 10), made Paul realize that law-keeping was required. Trying to obey it made him realize that inwardly, in the desires of his heart (especially coveting, v. 8, the sin forbidden in the tenth commandment), he was constantly breaking the law even before he knew it, and when he saw what he

was doing he could not stop it. Thus, Paul writes that sin, the anti-God, anti-law driving force within him, 'deceived me and... killed me' (v. 11). He became convinced that spiritually he was lifeless and lost. Paul offers his personal experience as an index of how sin and law relate in everyone" (*Ibid.*). "7:10 promised life. See Lev. 18:5; Deut. 30:15, 19. In itself, the law marks out a path that guarantees God's favor and humanity's happiness. But where sin reigns, the law brings only misery and death" (*Ibid.*).

#### **ELEVATE: (5-10 min.)**

Challenge one another in the general group by asking different participants to comment on the truth or falsity of the following statements:

1. We grow in our commitment to doing what is right even when it violates human law.
2. We become aware of the relevance of God's ancient laws to our personal lives.
3. We rediscover the conflict between the good we want to do and the evil we do.
4. We grow in our understanding of sin as the cause of spiritual death.
5. We practice self-discipline that leads us to growth in faith in spite of our sin.

#### **iTHINK: (5-7 min.)**

1. Cite examples of laws that have changed over the years. Discuss why some ancient laws do not seem relevant in the world today.
2. Suggest reading today's Scripture in more than one translation. What insights do learners gain by comparing the translations?
3. Invite participants to write one or two laws to live by in today's world. Then compare their suggestions to what Jesus said to a scribe who was curious about what commandment is most important (see Mark 12:28-31).
4. Talk about the Ten Commandments as key to all ancient laws. How does our understanding of God's law reflect these ancient laws of Israel? How does faith in Christ affect our understanding of the commandments?
5. Sing together a hymn or song that tells about the gift of God's law and what it means to us today (for example, "Wonderful Words of Life").
6. Consider Paul's words about knowing what sin is because of the law (v. 7). Discuss ways that God's law can both guide people in a good direction and make people aware of a sinful direction.

**KEY VERSE: 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. Romans 7:6**