

***Redemption in Romans***  
***The Man of Romans 7***  
Lesson #8 for August 21, 2010

Scriptures: Romans 7

1. In this chapter Paul described the terrible struggle that sinners go through in abandoning the sinful lifestyle and becoming true Christians. Scholars have debated at length about whether or not it is a description of Paul's own personal experience. If it is a description of Paul's own personal experience, was he talking about the struggle before his conversion—which, presumably, he would date to the Damascus Road experience—or was he talking about the struggle with sin even after he became a Christian? Did he have any twinges of conscience before the Damascus Road experience or was that a lightning bolt out of the blue? What was Saul/Paul's response to the stoning of Stephen? (See AA 112,113) At first, Saul/Paul became more determined to destroy Christians. Then, Paul had a "fruit basket upset." It is possible that Paul had memorized a large portion of the Old Testament in Hebrew. After Damascus it was time to rethink the entire meaning of the OT.
2. In Romans 5:1, we read that we can have peace with God. But, that certainly does not guarantee peace with anyone else!
3. In Romans 6 we are told that baptism is to represent the burial of our old ideas and ways of living. We are supposed to rise to a new life. But, we soon discover that the Devil is alive and well and so are our old habits. In fact, if we are trying to live a new life, a Christian life, the Devil may become even more active!
4. But Paul stated his belief clearly in Romans 6:14 by saying, "We are not under law but under grace." Shouldn't that take care of it all? Does it? Paul proceeded to say in Romans 6:23 (GNB) that, "Sin pays its wage: death." God does not kill people. Death is a consequence, not a penalty. (Genesis 2:17) God needed to prove that the consequence of sin is death, and that is the reason for the very costly death of Jesus. Satan would do anything to prove that the wages of sin are not death! So, we can see that the stakes are high. Satan claims that everyone who dies belongs to him. But, by rising from the dead in His own power, Jesus broke open the grave and destroyed Satan's claims. Do we believe that "sin pays it wage: death"? Notice that Jesus said, "God, why are you forsaking Me," not "Why are you killing Me." (Matthew 27:46)
5. So, what is the solution to this dilemma? For many Christians it is the process of "justification" which means that we are "declared righteous" by God. That raises several questions. If God can "declare us righteous" without any change actually taking place in us, how does that relate to this struggle with sin? If God can declare us righteous, shouldn't that take care of everything? And shouldn't that take care of everyone so that everyone is saved? If that is true, why does He delay His second coming? Why doesn't God just "set everyone right" and come back? If we have a new attitude toward God, is that a real change? Is God more concerned about our past or about our future? (Compare Luke 15) Is there any choice involved? Does love require a choice? If God could suddenly transform us without any consent on our part, why didn't He do that to Lucifer in the beginning?
6. Justification and sanctification together produce salvation. But, if we want to be "saved" or "healed," then is some change actually necessary? Do you agree with these words from our Bible study guide?

Whatever position one takes, what's important is that Jesus' righteousness covers us and that in his righteousness **we stand perfect before God**, who promises to sanctify us, to give us **victory over sin**, and to **conform us to**

**“the image of His Son”** (Romans 8:29). (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, August 14, 2010)

7. Here we see a conflict in metaphors. If our own behavior does not matter and Christ’s righteousness covers us completely, then we should not be talking about the struggle with sin. But, the Bible leaves us with this quandary: We are saved by our faith, (Acts 16:31) but we are judged by our works. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14) Does God intend for us to struggle with this dichotomy throughout our Christian experience? Are we saved by faith or by works? How are we to understand this controversy?
8. Read Romans 7:1-6. Does salvation come by keeping the rules? Paul tried to explain our relationship to the law by describing the experience of a woman who is married and whose husband dies. Once the husband is dead, she is free to remarry without committing adultery. This illustration would fit perfectly if it was the law that died. But, Paul makes it very clear that he—not the law—is the one who died. That confuses things. We do not have any human illustrations of a woman who dies and then remarries! So, what actually happens? If God is the one who kills, then His forgiveness is sufficient. But, if sin pays its wage, then someone else cannot reap the consequences. (Ezekiel 18 and 33)

As the death of her husband delivers the woman from the law of her husband, so the death of the old life in the flesh, through Jesus Christ, delivers the Jews from the law they had been expected to keep until the Messiah fulfilled its types.

Now the Jews were free to “remarry.” They were invited to marry the risen Messiah and thus bring forth fruit to God. This illustration was one more device Paul used to convince the Jews that **they were now free to abandon the ancient system.** (*Study Guide*, Sunday, August 15)

9. So, now we are faced with several challenging questions. Who or what actually died in this illustration? Paul later said that he died. What did Paul ask the Jews to abandon? Were they trying to keep the law as a way of being saved? (See Jeremiah 7) Does life go better when we do things God’s way? Or, is it better to live without law? As we know, our Christian friends have used these verses to say that the “law” has been done away with; it is dead. They believe they are now free to worship Christ as they see fit. Of course, they do not want to abandon any part of the moral law of Ten Commandments except the Sabbath. Is there any hint that Paul was trying to get rid of the Sabbath? They believe Christians should observe the other nine commandments! Is that a valid interpretation of this passage? Is there any evidence that Paul ever had such an idea in mind?
10. The apostle Paul, in relating his experience, presents an important truth concerning the work to be wrought in conversion. He says, ‘I was alive without the law once’—he felt no condemnation; ‘but when the commandment came,’ when the law of God was urged upon his conscience, ‘sin revived, and I died.’ Then he saw himself a sinner, condemned by the divine law. **Mark, it was Paul, and not the law, that died.**—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1076.
11. What law was Paul talking about in Romans 7? As we are well aware, there have been several different definitions of *law*. Perhaps the narrowest definition is one suggesting that the law refers to the Ten Commandments only. To a faithful Jew like Paul, the law would typically refer to the five books written by Moses known as the *Torah*. But, Jesus pointed out that sometimes *Law* is used to refer to the entire Old Testament. (John 10:34; Psalms 82:6) So, what did Paul have in mind in this passage? Or was he talking about the whole idea of law? Does Paul give us any hint?

12. Read Romans 7:7. We immediately recognize that Paul was referring to the tenth commandment in this passage. Wouldn't that suggest that in the previous passage the law that "died" would be the Ten Commandments? Or can law die? How do you teach your children to obey? Do you follow the directions in the manual for your new car? Why? How did your children learn to brush their teeth? Was it because of fear of punishment? Do they still brush their teeth? Why?
13. Seventh-day Adventists have explained their understanding of this passage as follows: The moral law is a direct reflection of God's character and is summed up by the two great commandments that Jesus Himself quoted in Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; and Luke 10:25-28. It is based on eternal principles that will never change. But, the books of Moses describe a great number of other laws and rules and statutes that no longer applied to people after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Can we do away with the rest of Moses' commands now? What if we were in their circumstances? Do we eat manna?
14. Why do you suppose Paul discussed the tenth commandment? It is interesting to note that in the books of Moses, there is a death sentence associated with the breaking of every commandment except the tenth! Why was that? Is it possible to take someone to court and prove that he has been coveting? Covetousness is not apparent externally; it is only in the mind. So, as human beings, we are really only able to recognize covetousness in ourselves. The tenth commandment actually forbids any evil desire. One must break it before he breaks any other commandment. It is completely internal, in our minds. That goes along with 1 John 3:4 which actually says, "Sin is rebelliousness." It fits also with all of Jesus' expansions of the law in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7)
15. Before the experience on the Damascus Road, Paul had believed that he was doing well in the eyes of God. As a Pharisee of the Pharisees, no doubt, he would have claimed as did the rich young ruler, "Ever since I was young, I have obeyed all these commandments." (Matthew 19:20; Mark 10:20; Luke 18:21, *GNB*) Paul's external behavior met the criteria the Pharisees had set up to measure the performance of a good Jew. But, when Paul looked at the tenth commandment, he recognized that it was a commandment that forbade even thinking wrong thoughts. It made him angry. He was willing to do what he believed God required him to *do*, but he thought it was an intrusion into his privacy for God to tell him what he was allowed to think!
16. But after considering the issue as a Christian, Paul came to a very different conclusion. He recognized that in virtually every case, we as human beings break the tenth commandment before we break any of the others. Thus, if God wants to create a perfect society in heaven and invite some of us to live there, He can only take people to heaven who do not even want to sin! Thus, the tenth commandment specifically becomes a guarantee of future safety in the heavenly kingdom and in the earth made new.
17. Before his Christian experience began, Paul was quite comfortable with his external behavior. He could read the first nine commandments and feel quite smug. So, what should our attitude be toward this whole issue?
18. Before Paul wrote Romans, he wrote Galatians. In Galatians 3:24, he stated clearly that the law is our "babysitter" to protect us until we learn to do right because it is right.
19. Our Bible study guide goes to some length in pointing out an important principle. The law is necessary because it points out sin. Without it we would not know what sin is. But the law was never intended to be the cure for sin. It is not a means of salvation. Thus, the law performs an important and essential function, but it can do nothing for our salvation.
20. Read Romans 7:12-15 (*GNB*). Thus, Paul concluded by saying, "The Law itself is holy, and

the commandment is holy, right, and good.” The law serves very well to do what it is supposed to do.

21. What does it mean to be “a slave of sin”? How is it that sin uses law to bring about our death? Evil is using something good to bring about something evil. Is the law at fault? Or is it sin that is using the perfectly good tool or instrument of the law to do its evil work?
22. Read Romans 7:14-20. All of us would agree that the requirements of the Ten Commandment moral law are reasonable and good. But, having concluded that, we have to admit with Paul that it is not natural for us to obey them. In fact, it is impossible for us to obey them in our own strength. Paul described his condition as being a slave of sin. He was not able to do what he wanted to do—what he knew was right—because sin operated in his body. Does the Devil make us do it? Does the Devil make us overeat? (James 1:14)
23. Some Christians hide behind Paul’s description in Romans 7. They are having trouble with the struggle to live a good life. So, they abandon that struggle and say it does not matter anyway because Christ can take care of it all. Is that what Paul intended?
24. Paul seems to have been trying to divide up the body and the mind. Can that be done? What did he mean when he talked about “my members” or “the body”? What did he mean when he talked about “my inner self” or “the mind”? What part of Paul wanted to do good? What part of Paul found it impossible to do good? Were there actually two conflicting powers in Paul’s body? Or in his mind?
25. Read Romans 7:21-25. What is “the law of my mind” that Paul talked about? What is “the law of my body”? What is “the law of God”? What is “the law of sin”? Do we believe that there is a conflict or even a war going on inside us? Where does the great controversy actually take place? Can we identify personally with these experiences of Paul?
26. Sometimes we have represented this conflict between good and evil as two angels, one good angel and one evil angel, tempting us to go in different directions. How do the Devil’s temptations enter into this struggle? We know that there is no way in which the body can, in fact, contradict the mind. All of this conflict takes place within the mind. Do we understand how these different forces interact within our brains? Is this the great controversy in action? Where does the great controversy take place?
27. Do you agree with Paul’s conclusion? Is it possible to “serve God’s law only with my mind, while my human nature serves the law of sin”? Can we at the same time serve more than one law? Can we serve more than one master?
28. In Romans 7, Paul struggled to try to describe a difficult and very personal conflict. He wanted us to understand clearly what the problem is before he gave his final solution in Romans 8. Some Christians, after reading Romans 5:1 and 6:14 for example, want to leave all of the work to Christ. They do not believe that they have any individual responsibility. But, Paul held no such illusion. He pictured our battle as a very real one.
29. Do we understand these issues clearly? Are we ready to “fight the good fight of faith”? (2 Timothy 4:7) In light of the great controversy over God’s character and government, do we clearly understand our role and God’s role in winning this battle?

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