

**The Church of God, International
Bible Correspondence Course**

LESSON 8

**The Law
and the Christian:
The Apostle Paul**

In previous lessons we laid the groundwork for understanding the law of God-especially as applied to the life of a Christian. We asked how a person is to know the difference between right and wrong, and demonstrated that the law was given to teach us the difference. We laid out the basics of the structure of biblical law and demonstrated how judgments are used to apply the law to life. Then we studied what Jesus had to say about the law of God and saw that far from abolishing the law, He was a teacher of the law.

Beginning with this lesson, we will study what the great apostle Paul had to say about the law in relation to life and salvation. Surely, no man has been more misunderstood nor his writings more misconstrued.

I Timothy 1:1-10

1. What is the goal or objective of the commandment?
2. Did Paul see a right way and a wrong way to use the law?
3. Were there teachers abroad who abused the law?
4. The law was not made for the righteous man. Does that mean the righteous man is free to ignore it?
5. The law was made for a different category of people. Are people like that still with us?
6. Is there still a need for the law?

Note: This passage assumes a code of law defining wrong human conduct. It is like saying that the laws prohibiting burglary were not written for the honest man, but for the thieves. This hardly grants honest men the right to become thieves.

Romans 2:1-29

7. By what will God judge a man? (verse 6)
8. Does the attainment of eternal life involve at all the things that a man does?
9. Can one sin with or without a knowledge of the law? What is the result of sin in either case?
10. Verses 13-15 are a parenthetical insert expanding on verse 12. Take a moment and write a paragraph explaining in your own words what Paul is trying to say here.
11. In this section there is a statement suggesting the basis upon which the law is founded. Can you find it?

12. How was it possible for the Gentiles to keep the law when they had never heard of it? (See also Romans 1:20-21.)
13. Will a man who refuses to do the law be justified before God? (verse 13)
14. There were both Jewish and Gentile converts in Rome. To which group is this chapter specifically addressed?
15. How is it possible to dishonor God? (verse 23)
16. Is it possible for God to count someone as circumcised, even when he is not?
17. Under what circumstances might a circumcised person be considered uncircumcised by God?
18. Which is better, to be circumcised and transgress the law, or to be uncircumcised and keep the law?

Romans 3:1-31

19. Is circumcision, then, meaningless?
20. When it comes to sin, are the Jews any better than the Gentiles because they received the oracles (utterances) of God? (verse 9)
21. What does Paul feel that he has thus far proved in Romans? (verse 9)

Note: Before we are finished with this subject, we will repeatedly encounter the concept of being "under the Law." We will see that it means something quite close to the expression in verse 9, "under sin." In chapter one, Paul goes to some lengths to establish the corruption of the Gentile systems, then goes on in chapter two to put the Israelites in their place. Here he concludes that they are all under sin—they are sinners, they are guilty, and they are all under the judgment of God.

22. To whom does the law speak? (verse 19)
23. Is it only Jewish mouths which are to be stopped?
24. Is it only Jews who become guilty before God?
25. Who, then, is "under the law"? Is it Jews only?

Note: Be careful to understand that it is not the law that causes men to be guilty, but it is the law that makes man aware that he is guilty. The law speaks to them who are already under the law that they may become guilty "before God." Paul will explain later how the knowledge of the law made him aware of his guilt—something he otherwise might not have known.

26. Can a man justify himself by doing "deeds of the law"? (verse 20)
27. What is the purpose of the law, then?

Note: Compare verse 20 with Romans 2:13. Paul is an intelligent man. Does it seem likely that he would contradict himself so obviously and so quickly? There are two points of view on these verses. First, there is the possibility that the phrase "deeds of the law" is a very narrow expression having to do with sacrifices and rituals. In this interpretation, "the doers of the law" is a reference to the whole of the law, while "deeds of the law" means something more limited. The second interpretation attempts no distinctions in law but sees Paul as saying that the purpose of the law is not to wipe out past sins, but to

make us know we are sinners. In 2:13, he is not saying that the law is instrumental in justification, but that those who would be justified by the blood of Christ cannot continue breaking the law-they must repent (Acts 2:38).

- 28. Is there a difference between Jews and Gentiles in their status before God?
- 29. Is there a different method of justification for Jews and Gentiles? Was there ever?

Note: In these passages, the word translated "without" in the authorized version is better translated "apart from." Remember that what is under discussion is not whether to keep the law, but whether one is justified by the law. Paul tells us, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." In other words, sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4). The law cannot make men good, but it can make them know when they are bad.

- 30. Even if a man kept the law of God perfectly, would he gain any credit with God? (Luke 17:3-10)
- 31. What is the effect of faith on the law? (verse 31)
- 32. Is the law somehow diminished, done away with, or abolished through faith?

II Peter 3:15-17

- 33. Did Peter consider Paul's letters to be plain and easily understood?
- 34. Would Peter have likely understood Paul's intent in his letters?
- 35. What was the error men were likely to fall into by twisting Paul's words? (verse 17)

Note: The word translated "the wicked" in the authorized version is better translated in the NIV and NRSV as "the lawless."

- 36. In the misapplication of Paul's epistles, was one more likely to make the mistake of (1) casting aside the law, or (2) keeping the law too diligently?

Romans 4:1-25

- 37. Was Abraham justified by works, or by faith?
- 38. Can righteousness be imputed to a man who has been a sinner?

Note: The short term for the imputation of righteousness is "justification." Verses 7 and 8 are descriptions of the state of the justified man. Verses 4 and 5 are an explanation that justification is accomplished apart from a man's works. It is not to say that there is nothing for a man to do, but that there is nothing he can do to justify himself.

- 39. Must one be circumcised, then, in order to be justified?
- 40. For Abraham, did circumcision come before or after justification?
- 41. Is it possible for an uncircumcised person to be justified?
- 42. Can an uncircumcised Gentile, who has faith, be considered a son of Abraham? 43. If one could become an heir by works of the law well enough, what would be the effect relative to faith and the promise?
- 44. Can there be transgressions where there is no law?
- 45. In practice, what does the law actually work in life?

46. What exactly was it that caused God to justify Abraham? (verses 21,22)
47. How, exactly, is our justification accomplished? Is it different from that of Abraham? (verses 24,25)

Note: Paul's entire thrust in this section of Romans has to do with justification. Justification is not ultimate salvation, but a declaration of innocence-our innocence. This is not to say that the law is done away, because the law reveals and defines the will of God for man. The law does not have the capacity to make one innocent-only to declare one guilty.

Romans 5:1-21

48. Are we then justified by faith or by works?
49. What is the agency of our justification? (verse 9)
50. Is there a difference between justification and salvation? Which comes first?
51. What else happens at justification? (verse 10)
52. What is the agency of our salvation?
53. Sin entered the world by one man (Adam), but why did that death pass upon all men? (verse 12)
54. When Paul says, "Until the law, sin was in the world," what law was he most likely talking about? (verse 13)
55. Was sin in the world before that law was given?
56. Did death pass upon men who had sinned, even though the sin was not the same as that of Adam?
57. Was there a law, then, prior to the codification of the law under Moses?
58. Was sin imputed to men because they broke that law?
59. What was the effect of the giving of the Mosaic law? (verse 20)

Note: Be careful with this one. Some have interpreted this to say that the law is a cause of sin. Paul will conclude that sin abounds in our consciousness as a result of the law. Because the law was given, man became aware of the abundance of his sin, and thus aware of his need for a savior.

60. What was even more abundant than sin?

Romans 6:1-23

61. What is sin? (See again I John 3:4.)
62. Since we are under grace, are we free to commit sin? (See verse 15.)
63. If you are "under the law," what is your relationship to sin? (verse 14)
64. We have seen John's definition of sin. Having read this chapter, take a moment to write a short paragraph describing Paul's definition of sin.
65. Paul speaks of being "under the law." Does he define sin in relation to that law or some other law? (See verses 14,15.)
66. Are we then free to break that law because we are no longer "under the law"?

Romans 7:1-25

67. How long does the law hold "dominion over" a man?

68. If the law has dominion over a man, is it fair to say that a man is "under the law"?
69. How does a man get out from under the dominion of the law? (verses 4,6)
70. Verse 6 says that we serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Spirit and letter of what?
71. Is the law, then, sin? What purpose does the law serve? (verse 7)
72. Was the commandment ordained to life or death? (verse 7)
73. How did the commandment bring about death?
74. Is the law a good thing or a bad thing? (verse 12)
75. Was it the law, or sin that brought about death in Paul? (verse 13)
76. In this chapter, Paul selects one commandment as an example of a class of law. What overall law is Paul speaking of?

Note: Paul at times seems ambivalent about the law. On the one hand he tells us that it is holy, just, and good. On the other hand, he tells us that the law stands over man claiming his life and that man is freed from the law through the sacrifice of Christ. You may have felt like asking if the real Paul would stand up. But when you understand what he is really saying, it becomes clear enough. The law was given by God to define the difference between right and wrong. As long as a man is obeying the law, it is his friend. When he breaks the law, the law becomes his enemy. And since every man who has ever lived has broken the law again and again, the law demands the death of every man. So to be under the law is to be under sin. To be under sin is to be under death. Jesus Christ has freed us from the law and given us liberty. But that liberty is a freedom from death, not a freedom to continue in sin. In the next lesson, we will continue with Paul's theology of sin and the law. Meanwhile, we have a parallel study course on the life and teachings of Paul. This course is on cassette tape and goes verse by verse through the book of Acts and all of Paul's letters, studying them in chronological order. Write for the introductory lesson of the Epistles of Paul. It is free of charge and there is no obligation.

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