

The Goodness and Impotence of the Law – Part 2
Romans 7:7-13
July 9, 2020

Review

- Chs 5-8 The gospel and the sure hope it gives
- 5:1-11 Blessed results of justification
- 5:12-21 The reign of God’s grace in the second Adam, and how it is superior to the reign of sin through the first Adam
- Ch 6 The triumph of grace over the power of sin
- 7:1-8:17 The triumph of grace over the power of the law
- 7:1-6 The Christian has been released from the law in order to come under Christ’s authority and be joined to Him forever, and now serves God in the New Covenant way, the way of the Holy Spirit, not in the Old Covenant way, the way of the written code
- 7:7-13 The goodness and impotence of the law, as seen in the effect the law had upon Paul before he was joined to Christ**
- 7:14-23 The goodness and impotence of the law, as seen in Paul’s inability as a Christian, in and of himself, to obey the law, even with a new heart that truly delights in it
- 7:24-25 The cry of the Christian to his Savior to deliver him from “this body of death,” which God will do in glorification

Question: What does Paul say brought death to him? Explain what this is that brought death to him.

The law brings about knowledge of sin (7)

7a “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means!”

- The question is raised by...
 - The teaching in verses 1-6 that a person has to be released from the law and joined to Another in order to bear fruit for God
 - **7:5** (related to 5:20)

*By Steve Sherman, Pastor of Christian Fellowship Church, North Brunswick, NJ.
Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).*

7b “Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’”

1. Apart from the written law of God, a person is guilty before God, is accused by their conscience (2:15), and may acknowledge that they do some bad things
2. But it is the written law of God that reveals God’s righteous standard; reveals sin as sin (rebellion against God and His righteous standard); and reveals that we are sinners

The law occasions the production of all kinds of sin (8)

Question: What does it mean in verse 8 that sin seized an opportunity through the commandment and produced in Paul all kinds of covetousness?

8a “But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness.”

“Augustine in his *Confessions* tells of a time in his youth when he and a band of his friends went into a neighbor’s field at night to steal pears. They shook the neighbor’s pear tree, knocking down a large quantity of pears, then carried them off, eating a few but throwing most of them to some pigs. Why did Augustine steal the pears? With characteristic thoroughness, this great medieval theologian analyzes the question for many pages.

Was it the beauty of the pears? They were beautiful, it is true, since they were part of God’s creation. But that was not why he stole them. He had others of even greater beauty at home.

Was he hungry and needed something to eat? That was not it.

Did he want to be approved by the others? That was part of the reason, he says. But it does not explain why the others, like himself, should have given approval for such a wrong act. Why should stealing be praiseworthy?

At last Augustine gets to the real reason, saying, “I only picked them so that I might steal.... I loved nothing in it except the thieving.” It is a way of saying that the desire to steal was awakened by the prohibition.”¹

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, 2:742.

8b “For apart from the law, sin lies dead.”

- Sin is there, but is not recognized nor yet aroused by the law

The law is death to the sinner (9-11)

9 “I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

1. Happened when the commandment came home to him, when it brought true conviction of sin
2. Before this happens to a person, the person perceives himself (wrongly) to be alive
 - **Luke 18:18–21** And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”
3. When a person is truly convicted of his sin by the law, his eyes are opened to his true spiritual condition—spiritually dead

10 “The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.”

1. **10:5** “For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.”
2. **Lev. 18:5** “You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”

11 “For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.”

1. Our rebellious disposition distorts our view of all things and makes disobedience alluring
2. The problem lies not with the law but with the disposition of our heart

The law is holy and good (12)

The law is God’s law, and takes its character from Him

“holy”

“righteous”

“good”

The law is used by sin (13)

13a “Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means!”

1. **Literally, NIV** “become death to me”
2. Did it cause his spiritual death?

13 “...It was sin, producing death in me through what is good...”

1. The law is not to blame
2. It is our inner rebelliousness that is to blame

13 “...in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.”

Conclusion

The law cannot justify man, for man is under sin

The law brings about knowledge of sin, occasions the production of all sorts of sin, and shows that we are spiritually dead, for a purpose that is holy, righteous, and good—that people would believe the gospel and be saved!

Only those who recognize their helpless condition under the law can see their need for the gospel

The Holy Spirit works through the Law in this way in the heart of every soul whom He draws to Christ

The law is essential in evangelism