

So Why did God Give the Law? Pt 2

Romans 7:7–13 (NKJV)

⁷ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “*You shall not covet.*”⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me *all manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

¹³ Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

Introduction:

In the general picture out there of evangelicalism today, there is certainly much said about God's love, much said about God's mercy, much said about His grace. There is a great emphasis on the fact that God forgives, that He empowers. Almost nothing is said about the Law of God, about the judgment of God, about the heinousness of violating His Law, and the just consequences of such a violation. And so in a sense, the gospel, which means the good news, is stripped of what is really good, because people don't know what is really bad, which makes the good news such good news.

The bad news is that all people are under the Law of God. They're under obligation to obey that Law. They are all violators of that Law, therefore they come under true guilt and with guilt comes condemnation and with condemnation comes punishment, and that punishment is everlasting. The gospel cannot be understood as good news, until people understand what it is that the gospel delivers them from, namely the bad news of eternal punishment, which is a just punishment on a truly guilty sinner. People are trying to get other folks into heaven while at the same time avoiding telling them they're on their way to hell. Trying to get them to accept what is good for them, without understanding the truth about what is so bad for them.

And were you to ask the question to people out there as they looked at evangelicalism and listened to the general message that Christians give, if you posed the question, “What does Jesus save you from?” They might say loneliness, depression, poverty, lack of purpose, lack of meaning, lack of fulfillment, et cetera, because they do not understand guilt, condemnation that comes because of a violation of His Law.

Scripture, however, is very clear that anyone who is to grasp the greatness of the gospel must first grasp the greatness of judgment of sin. Salvation by grace means little to those who know nothing of damnation under the Law. So the divine order is Law, then gospel. And there is a reluctance on the part of evangelical people today to talk about the Law of God, because it makes people feel bad, and they think it makes the gospel less attractive. When in fact, it is necessary to make them feel bad, really bad, because that generates the true attraction to the gospel. We understand that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, Ephesians 2:8 and 9. We understand that salvation is never by works but always by grace through faith. All who are saved from eternal damnation at all times in redemptive history are saved by faith and grace apart from the Law. This is the repeated testimony of Scripture. In the Old Testament, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Or Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Or in Habakkuk, the just shall live by faith. This is not a New Testament truth. This is a universal truth throughout all of redemptive history. Salvation – deliverance

from condemnation, eternal punishment – comes by God’s grace through faith.

In the book of Romans, we read this morning in chapter 3 and verse 20, “By the works of the Law, no flesh will be justified in His sight. Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.” That verse alone ought to be indelibly impressed upon our minds to give us an understanding of the function of the Law. The Law does not save. By the works of the Law, no flesh will be justified in His sight. Rather, through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. The next verse says, “Apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested – even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus.”

I. The Good

⁷ What shall we say then? *Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”*

⁷ Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὁ νόμος ἁμαρτία; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνων εἰ μὴ διὰ νόμου, τὴν τε γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ᾔδειν εἰ μὴ ὁ νόμος ἔλεγεν· Οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις

Harris, W. H., III. (2010). [The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition](#) (Ro 7:7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

II. The Bad

⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.

⁸ ἀφορμὴν δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς κατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν, χωρὶς γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία νεκρά.

Harris, W. H., III. (2010). [The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition](#) (Ro 7:7–8). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁸ But **sin**, taking **opportunity** by
the commandment,

⁸ ἀφορμὴν δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς
ἐντολῆς

sin

ἡ ἁμαρτία

The sin, definite article, most likely

1. the sin nature
2. A specific Sin, i.e. covetousness
3. not just sin in general

taking opportunity

ἀφορμὴν first in Greek sentence

874 aphormé (from 575 /apó, "away from" and 3730 /hormé, "a violent rush") – properly, a pretext ("launching point") to assert an idea – literally, "what charges from (off) a starting point"; (figuratively) the occasion something has to come forward because having the "successful launching pad" to get something started ("affording an opportunity"). 874 (aphormé) is usually used negatively in the NT, but positively in 2 Cor 5:12.

This is in Gk. a purely formal term for “start,” “origin,” “cause,” “stimulus,” “impulse,” “undertaking,” “pretext,” “possibility,” “inclination,” also as a Stoic word “aversion” as the opp. of ὁρμή. Aristot. Cael., II, 12, p. 292a, 16 has it for “means of assistance.” In Pol., VI, 5, p. 1320a, 39, b, 8 it means “opportunity” for trade or agriculture, or more generally for work with a view to overcoming unemployment. “Logical starting-point” is the sense in Ps.-Aristot. Rhet. Al., 3, p. 1423a, 33; b, 14, 32; 39, p. 1445b, 29; in Eur. Hec., 1238 f. we also find the sense “pretext”:

Bertram, G. (1964-). ὁρμή, ὄρμημα, ὁρμάω, ἀφορμή. G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 472). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

⁸ But **sin**, taking **opportunity by**
the **commandment**,

⁸ **ἀφορμὴν** δὲ λαβοῦσα **ἡ ἁμαρτία** διὰ τῆς
ἐντολῆς

by the **commandment**,

Usage: (a) **gen:** through, throughout, by the instrumentality of, (b) **acc:** through, on account of, by reason of, for the sake of, because of.

It is important to note what Paul does *not* say here. He does not say that the law produced in him the

desire to covet, but rather that sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment

Kruse, C. G. (2012). *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. (D. A. Carson, Ed.) (p. 301). Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos.

Romans 7:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

Romans 7:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good.

It is a distressing fact about human nature that any prohibition tends to awake in us a desire to transgress that prohibition.

The standard illustration is the passage in Augustine's *Confessions* in which he speaks of the time as a boy when he joined his companions in stealing pears, not because they wanted them (they fed them to pigs), but because they wanted the pleasure of disobeying the law.

Mark Twain said that if a mule thinks he knows what you want him to do he will do just the opposite, and Twain admitted he was like that himself—often mean for the sake of meanness. But the fault lies not in the ideal but in the man who reacts against it.”

The point of it all is that until the command not to do an evil thing comes we may not feel much urge to do it, but when we hear the command our native mulishness takes over. But the fault is not in the command. It is in the mulishness, in the sinner.

Morris, L. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 280). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

⁸ **But sin**, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire.

ατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν
ἐπιθυμίαν

produced

ατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν

katergázomai (from **2596 /katá**, "down, exactly according to," intensifying **2038 /ergázomai**, "work, accomplish") – literally, **"work down to the end-point," i.e. to an exact, definite conclusion** (note

the prefix, [2596](#) /katá); bring to decisive finality (end-conclusion).

Wrought in me (κατειργασατο ἐν ἐμοί [*kateirgasato en emoi*]). First aorist active middle indicative of the intensive verb κατεργαζομαι [*katergazomai*], to work out (to the finish), effective aorist. **The command not to lust made me lust more.**

Robertson, A. T. (1933). [Word Pictures in the New Testament](#) (Ro 7:8). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

James 1:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

James 4:1 (NKJV)

4 Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

Genesis 6:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21 (NKJV)

²¹ And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

Matthew 15:18–20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. ²⁰ These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

In his book *Principles of Conduct*, John Murray observes that the more the light of God’s law shines into our depraved hearts, the more the enmity of our minds is aroused to opposition, proving that the mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God ([Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957], p. 185).

When a person is confronted by God’s law, the forbidden thing becomes all the more attractive, not so much for its own sake as for its furnishing a channel for the assertion of self-will.

In his rich allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan paints a vivid word picture of sin's arousal by the law. A large, dust-covered room in Interpreter's house symbolizes the human heart. When a man with a broom, representing God's law, begins to sweep, the dust swirls up and all but suffocates Christian. That is what the law does to sin. It so agitates sin that it becomes stifling. And just as a broom cannot clean a room of dust but only stir it up, so the law cannot cleanse the heart of sin but only make the sin more evident and unpleasant.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). *Romans* (Vol. 1, pp. 371–372). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. **For apart from the law sin was dead.**

⁸ ἀφορμὴν δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς κατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν, χωρὶς γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία νεκρά.

Harris, W. H., III. (2010). *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition* (Ro 7:7–8). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

If there is no law, clearly there is no transgression of law. Without a commandment there can be no disobedience. Paul is establishing the point that the law does not in practice function as a means of salvation. Rather, it is a means of establishing people's guilt. It gives them something to sin against and in this way is an ally of sin. The commandment is aimed at our good, but it is quite possible for us to view it as a limitation on our freedom. Seen in that light it becomes a cause of resentment and opposition. Without something to rebel against there could be no rebels.

Morris, L. (1988). [The Epistle to the Romans](#) (p. 280). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Romans 4:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.

It is not that sin has no existence apart from the law, because that is obviously not true. Paul has already stated that, long before the law was revealed, sin entered the world through Adam and then spread to all his descendants (Rom. 5:12). "Until the Law sin was in the world," he

goes on to explain, “but sin is not imputed when there is no law” (v. 13). Paul’s point in Romans 7:8 is that **sin is dead** in the sense that it is somewhat dormant and not fully active. It does not overwhelm the sinner as it does when **the Law** becomes known.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [Romans](#) (Vol. 1, p. 372). Chicago: Moody Press.

Romans 5:13 (NKJV)

¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

John 15:22 (NKJV)

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

1 Corinthians 15:56 (NKJV)

⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law.

Romans 5:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

I. The Good

II. The Bad

III. The Ugly

⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

⁹ I was alive once without the law,

⁹ ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρίς νόμου ποτέ·

Emphatic use of the I

once

pote: once, ever

Original Word: ΠΟΤΕ

Part of Speech: Particle, Disjunctive Particle

Transliteration: pote

Phonetic Spelling: (pot-eh')

Usage: at one time or other, at some time, formerly.

some commentators say this refers to the time as a child before he became fully conscious of the Law **But I disagree.** I believe that Paul has in mind his pre conversion experience, when he was lost.

Galatians 1:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Galatians 1:23 (NKJV)

²³ But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to* destroy.”

Ephesians 2:1–2 (NKJV)

2 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you **once** walked according to the course of this world, according to

the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

Ephesians 2:3 (NKJV)

³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Ephesians 2:13 (NKJV)

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who **once** were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ For you were **once** darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

The law not only reveals and arouses sin but also ruins and destroys the sinner. Still recounting his own experience before salvation, Paul confesses that he had long been **alive apart from the Law**. As a highly-trained and zealous Pharisee, he was certainly **not apart from the law** in the sense of not knowing or being concerned about it. He was an expert on the law and considered himself to be blameless in regard to it, thus thinking he lived a life that pleased God (Phil. 3:6).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [Romans](#) (Vol. 1, p. 372). Chicago: Moody Press.

Philippians 3:3–10 (NKJV)

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:

⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Matthew 19:16–20 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

¹⁷ So He said to him, “**Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.**”

¹⁸ He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Jesus said, “***‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’*** ¹⁹ ***‘Honor your father and your mother,’*** and, ***‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’***”

²⁰ The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”

Luke 18:9–12 (NKJV)

⁹ Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

¹⁰ **“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**

¹¹ **The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’**

From a human standpoint, this is the most difficult obstacle to overcome in the lost man. He believes he is alive. He believes he is ok. He believes he is justified in God's Sight.

Most believe they are ok. This is why there is no urgency for the gospel.

So the challenge is to show the sinner that he is dead. That he is alienated and under judgment of God.

Romans 3:9–20 (NKJV)

⁹ What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

¹⁰ As it is written:

“There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ *There is none who understands;*

There is none who seeks after God.

¹² *They have all turned aside;*

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one.”

¹³ *“Their throat is an open tomb;*

With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;

“The poison of asps is under their lips”;

¹⁴ *“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”*

¹⁵ *“Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

¹⁶ *Destruction and misery are in their ways;*

¹⁷ *And the way of peace they have not known.”*

¹⁸ *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

This is why it is so important for men and women to hear the Law of God,

The Gospel is only good news because of the bad news.

Our starting point to often to day is the good news. But with out the bad news, it makes no sense.

We start wrongly with the fruit of the gospel,

like, would you like a better relationship with your spouse. Would you like better control of your finances. Would you like victory over your

additions

Depression

Guilt

When we have not been brought to death by the law. We need to sense the weight of our offense. The magnitude of our guilt. The fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a living God who is holy.

There are millions of men and women who believe they are alive but they are not. They believe they see but they are blind. They believe they are good but they are not.

Morris, L writes

He is alive in the sense that he has never been put to death as a result of a confrontation with the law of God. His lack of remorse and his enjoyment of the evil he does make up a sorry imitation of that life which is life indeed. But Paul is emphasizing that the law puts the sinner to death. The person of whom he is writing has not died as a result of a confrontation with the law. In that sense he is alive.

Morris, L. (1988). [*The Epistle to the Romans*](#) (p. 281). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν,

The commandment may mean the law of God in general, or it may point particularly to the commandment of which Paul has been speaking, the commandment not to covet. Whichever way we take it, the commandment of course had been in existence long before Paul appeared. His meaning is not that it had its origin in Paul's day, **but as Moffatt translates, "the command came home to me" (cf. Calvin, "when it has begun to be truly understood")**.

Hunter remarks, "there is no period in life to which a man can look back as the time when he had no conscience. Still, there comes a day when we come rudely up against the demands of the moral law".⁵⁷

It is that day of which Paul is speaking, a day we can recognize, for we too have come to see God's

demand for what it is and to see that alongside that demand our lives don't measure up.

Then, Paul says, *sin sprang to life and I died*. Sin was there but dormant. When the commandment came home to him, it was no longer possible to overlook its existence. Paul puts this vividly with *sin sprang to life*. Now he could not but see himself as a sinner, condemned before God. The result was death. LB translates "... a sinner, doomed to die." But Paul does not say "I was doomed to die", but "I died" (cf. v. 24).

When the commandment "came" it killed forever the proud Pharisee thanking God that he was not as other men and sure of his merits before God. It killed off the happy sinner, for it showed him the seriousness, not so much of sin in general as of his own sin. The "coming" of the law in that sense always kills off our cheerful assumption of innocence. We see ourselves for what we really are, sinners, and we die. This is not the death "to sin" of which Paul wrote earlier (6:2, etc.). That is a saving death, a death we die in our union with Christ, a death that frees us from our bondage to sin. Here the thought is rather that to realize that we are not good and decent people in God's sight is a death. It marks the end of self-confidence, self-satisfaction, self-reliance. It is death.

Morris, L. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (pp. 281–282). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

10 And the
commandment, which *was* to
bring life, I found to *bring* death.

Romans 10:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “*The man who does those things shall live by them.*”

Leviticus 18:5 (NKJV)

⁵ You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel 20:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, ‘which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them.’

Luke 10:27–28 (NKJV)

²⁷ So he answered and said, “ ‘*You shall love the Lord* your God with all your heart, with all your soul,

with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and
 ‘*your neighbor as yourself.*’”

²⁸ And He said to him, “**You have answered rightly;
 do this and you will live.**”

Galatians 3:12 (NKJV)

¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but “*the man who does
 them shall live by them.*”

10 And the
 commandment, which *was* to
bring life, **I found to bring death**

και ευρεθη μοι η εντολη η εις ζωην αυτη εις
 θανατον

heuriskó: to find to be proven Passive Verb

Original Word: εύρίσκω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: heuriskó

Phonetic Spelling: (hyoo-ris'-ko,)

Definition: to find

Usage: I find, learn, discover, especially after searching.

Paul says the commandment “was found to me”; the passive indicates that he did not find it as a result of vigorous search. Rather, it was disclosed without any initiative of his own.

Morris, L. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 282). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

2 Corinthians 3:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷ But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away,

Romans 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Romans 4:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.

Galatians 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

What he had considered to be a means of gaining eternal **life** had turned out to be the way of spiritual **death**.

God gave the law to provide blessing for those who love and serve Him. Throughout the Old Testament, the Lord gave His people such promises as, “How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart” (Ps. 119:1–2).

But the law, the **commandment**, cannot produce blessing and peace in the unbeliever, because he cannot fulfill the law’s requirements and therefore stands under its sentence of **death**. The law cannot produce the **life** it was meant to produce because no man is able to meet the law’s perfect standard of righteousness. If it were possible, perfect obedience to the law could bring life. But because such

obedience is *not* possible for fallen, sinful man, the law brings him **death** rather than life.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). *Romans* (Vol. 1, p. 373). Chicago: Moody Press.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, **deceived** me, and by it killed *me*.

11 ἡ γὰρ ἁμαρτία ἀφορμὴν λαβοῦσα διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς **ἐξηπάτησέν** με καὶ δι' αὐτῆς ἀπέκτεινεν.

deceived

exapataó: to seduce wholly, deceive

Original Word: ἐξαπατάω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: exapataó

Phonetic Spelling: (ex-ap-at-ah'-o)

Definition: to seduce wholly, deceive

Usage: I deceive thoroughly.

HELPS Word-studies

1818 eksapatáō (from 1537ek, "wholly out/from," intensifying **538** /apatáō, "deceive") – properly, thoroughly deceived ("hood-winked"), describing someone taken in, and enslaved by, Satan (sin, darkness).

Paul says that sin also **deceived** him. Deceit is one of sin's most subtle and disastrous evils. A person who is **deceived** into thinking he is acceptable to God because of his own merit and good works will see no need of salvation and no reason for trusting in Christ.

It is doubtless for that reason that all false religions—including those that claim the name of Christ—in one way or another are built on a deceptive foundation of self-trust and self-effort. Self-righteousness is not righteousness at all but is the worst of sins. Both by the standard of the law and by the standard of grace, the very term *self-righteousness* is a self-contradiction.

Sometime before his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road, Paul came to recognize sin's deceit and the law's impossible demands and was convicted by the Holy Spirit of his own unrighteousness and spiritual helplessness.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [*Romans*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 373–374). Chicago: Moody Press.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)

⁹“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”

Ephesians 4:22 (NKJV)

²²that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

Hebrews 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

(though Godet finds in the law “the Mosaic system in its entirety” and in the commandment “each article of the code in particular”).

Morris, L. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 283). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

The apostle again answers the question, “Is the law sin?” (7:7). Now he declares that not only is the law not sin but that **the law is**, in fact, **holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good**. Throughout the remainder of the chapter Paul

continues to praise and exalt God's law, calling it spiritual (v. 14), good (v. 16), and joyfully concurring in his "inner man" with its divine truth and standards (v. 22).

David highly exalted God's law, proclaiming:

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Ps. 19:7–11)

The fact that the law reveals, arouses, and condemns sin and brings death to the sinner does not make the law itself evil. When a person is justly convicted and sentenced for murder, there is no fault in the law or with those responsible for upholding it. The fault is in the one who broke the law

¹³ Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

³ Τὸ οὖν ἀγαθὸν ἐμοὶ ἔγένετο θάνατος; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἵνα φανῆ ἁμαρτία διὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοι κατεργαζομένη θάνατον· ἵνα γένηται καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἁμαρτωλὸς ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς.

exceedingly sinful.

hyperbolé: a throwing beyond, excess, superiority

Original Word: ὑπερβολή, ῆς, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: hyperbolé

Phonetic Spelling: (hoop-er-bol-ay')

Definition: a throwing beyond, excess, superiority

Usage: excess, surpassing excellence, preeminence; adv: exceedingly.

Cognate: 5236 hyperbolé – This very emphatic term means "superlatively, beyond, measure" (Souter). [See 5235](#) (hyperbállō).

Once again anticipating a question that would naturally come to mind in light of what he has said, Paul asks, **Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me?** And once again Paul answers his own question with a resounding, **May it never be!**

To use again the analogy of the murder trial, it is not the law against murder but the committing of murder that merits punishment. The law itself is good; it is the breaking of it that is evil. How much more is God's law **good**, and how much more evil is the breaking of it.

It is not the law that is the cause of spiritual death but **rather it is sin**. The law reveals and arouses sin **in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting ... death through that which is good**. Sin's deadly character is exposed under the pure light of God's law.

God has given His holy, righteous, and good law in order **that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful**. As already noted, the

preaching of the law is necessary to the preaching of the gospel. Until men see their sin for what it is, they will not see their need of salvation from it.

Paul's point here is that sin is so **utterly sinful** that it can even pervert and undermine the purpose of God's holy law. It can twist and distort the law so that instead of bringing life, as God intended, it brings death. It can manipulate the pure law of God to deceive and damn people. Such is the awful wretchedness of sin.

In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul gives additional insight on the place and purpose of the law.

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Gal. 3:19–22)

The ultimate purpose of the law was to drive men to faith in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the demands of the law on behalf of sinners who trust in His righteousness instead of their own.

Although Robert Murray McCheyne died in 1843 at the age of thirty, he left God's people a great treasure in his memoirs and other writings. In the poem "Jehovah Tsidkenu," which means, "The Lord Our Righteousness," he testifies:

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on
the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;
But even when they pictured the blood-
sprinkled tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul,
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the
tree
Jehovah Tsidkenu—'twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me by light from on
high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Savior must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet
name;
My guilty fear banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free—
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [*Romans*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 374–376). Chicago: Moody Press.

