

Law without Legalism
Romans 7:5-13
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INTRODUCTION

So far the Law (summarized by the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20) does not look good in Romans. Romans makes comparisons between God's Law, and sin that are surprising, and a little uncomfortable! The Law is not evil (Psl 19, Psl 119, Rom 7:7 etc). So, why is Paul comparing the Law of God with sin?

Because his audience (“those who know the Law” in Romans 7:1) was taught to earn righteousness by keeping the Law. Romans chapter seven is written to help recovering legalists learn the right use of the Law. “Legalism” is believing that you earn or keep God's love by your good works.

And so Paul helps these people see the short coming of the Law; the Law can only condemn, it can not save (2 Cor 3:6-11).

The main point of Romans chapter six is that Christians were slaves to sin, but now we have been set free: “when ye were the servants of sin...But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (Romans 6:20-22).”

And the main point of Romans chapter seven is that Christians were bound by the Law, but we have been set free from this as well: “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?...But now we are delivered from the law... (Romans 6:1-6).”

This is the glorious change that comes with the new birth! A Christian is set free from both slavery to sin, and from the obligation to be perfect under the Law of God. And this change, freedom from sin, and the Law comes in the same way, through the death of Christ:

If you are in Christ then you are dead to sin (Romans 6:2) and if you are in Christ you are dead to the Law (Romans 7:4).

So, suffer no delusions about your ability to earn God's favor. Just as we die to sin to be free from its power, we must die to self-righteousness to be free from the burden of the Law.

This message against legalism is very helpful to us because we also tend to misuse the Law. If you think God loves you because you do good works, or if you think you are better than someone else because you keep more of the Law, you are misusing the Law!

“But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully (1 Tim 1:8).” So what is the right use of the Law? This passage teaches us that the right use of the Law is to:

Let God's Law expose your sin, and teach you about holiness!

But never see the Law as a way to earn God's mercy and love, because those are free gifts given to all who trust Jesus!

Romans 7:5-6 Jesus' Mercy Delivers you From the Power of the Law

The Law produced death in us but we have been released from the Law to serve in the Spirit.

Vs 5 “...in the flesh, the motions of sins...” The Bible speaks of being “in the flesh” as the opposite of following the Spirit of God. “The flesh” is the sinful nature inherited from Adam. But when one trusts Jesus (the second “Adam” - 1 Cor 15:45) they are reborn “into Christ” so that they can live according to His spirit (Romans 8:1), but before one is “in Christ” they are “in the flesh.”

And “in the flesh” we are subject to the “ **the motions of sins.**” These are driving passions or strong feelings that rob you of your peace and drive you to follow sin. Every other time this word “motions” appears in the Bible it is translated as “suffering” (2 Cor 1:7, Col 1:24, 1 Pet 1:11, 1 Pet 4:13) or “affliction” (2 Tim 3:11, Heb 10:32, 1 Pet 5:9).

The law kills to end this vicious cycle, but it cannot cure. We needed something else, someone else that can deliver us...

Vs 6 “But now we are delivered from the law,” The letter of the Law is old to us because everyone receives it when learn to discern right from wrong, the Spirit is new because He comes to a person who is born again. We need God to make us new and deliver us from the power of the Law.

Serve God, not self-righteousness by seeking deliverance from the Law through Jesus' mercy!

Romans 7:7-10 The Law is Not the Problem, Sin is the Problem

Vs 7 So is the Law sin? No, the Law sheds light on sin so that we know to avoid it and so that we know we need to be saved from condemnation.

Vs 7 “Lust” and “Covet” are basically the same word which means giving yourself to a strong desire. And the context tells us that this is setting your heart upon a strong, inappropriate desire; consider Matthew 5:28.

Notice also that the Law is not a code of external obedience. The Law faithfully tells us how we should be on the inside; “Thou shalt not covet” goes much deeper than “Thou shalt not steal.”

Learn from the Law that God is looking for more than “going through the motions,” we need a change of heart!

If you accept Jesus as your Lord, trust His resurrection, and ask for His salvation, you will be redeemed by His own blood and born again (your heart will be changed) by the Word of God which is the Gospel. And just as the Word of God lives forever, the new person born in you by that same word will live forever (1 Peter 1:21-25).

If you know that you need to obey God in the inner person, trust Jesus and ask Him to remake you!

Vs 8 “the commandment” Paul begins using the term “the commandment” to refer to a specific part of the Law.

Vs 8 “wrought in me all manner of concupiscence” “**Concupiscence**” means a strong lustful desire. This is the same word that is translated “lust” and “covet” in **Vs 7** but it is more emphatic. The Law is designed to restrain sin, but when a person's nature is given over to sin, the unlawful activity becomes more enticing because it is unlawful.

See the evil of sin: sin always takes what is bad and tries to make it worse!

Vs 8 “without the law sin was dead” Sin's real power comes into force when we chose to do things that we know are wrong. We might sin without knowing that an action is wrong, but when we sin with understanding the effect is deadly...

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1Co 15:56-58).”

Vs 9-10 At this point the impact of sin and the Law in a life becomes very personal to Paul. He writes these two verses in a way that emphasize his own experience and struggles in this area. Paul's story is shared by all sinners. The “I” of this passage is Paul, it was Adam, and it could be any of us.

Learn this lesson, sin always takes what is meant for good and twists it into evil!

The healthy desire for a marriage relationship...sin turns into lust. A healthy appreciation for what is good...sin turns into greed. A healthy desire to do right and honor God...sin turns to legalism. A healthy joy in what God is doing in your life...sin turns to pride, and on and on...There is much truth to the old idea that evil cannot create or heal, but only pervert or destroy.

See the sinfulness of sin: sin always takes what is meant for good and tries to use it for evil!

Let the Law expose sin by considering your ways in the light of the Law! Know the Law so that you can see sin in all of its hateful, ugly shame and seek mercy from God!

CONCLUSION

Romans 7:11-13 The Law Teaches Us About God's Holiness and Our Need For Mercy

Vs 11 This is what sin does, it deceives us and perverts what is good into something bad.

The commandment, the good thing from God was turned into a weapon by sin and used against Paul, just as it was with Adam. God gave Adam and Eve one commandment to protect their life, give them the gift of free choice, and the joy of trusting Him. The commandment was good! But Satan used the good commandment from God like a weapon to trick Eve, tempt Adam, and kill them both.

Vs 11-12 This is the answer to **Vs 7**. The Law cannot save, and it can be used against us by sin, but it is still holy, just, and good.

“Holy” - The Law is holy because it is untouched by sin and is prior to the World:

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth (Psl 119:89-90).”

“Just” - The Law is just because it is always right and without error:

“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether (Psl 19:9).”

“Good” - The Law is good because it is extremely useful:

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (Psl 19:7).”

Vs 13 The problem is not with the Law, but with sin and with us!. Sin messes everything up, it takes

what is good and turns it to evil. And but for the grace of God we obediently follow sin to the death that God never intended for us.

“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Eze 33:11)”

If you have not yet trusted Christ, let God's Law expose your sin and see that you need God's mercy!

“Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen (Deut 27:15-26).”

Have you ever disrespected your father or mother? Then you are under the *curse of God*. Have you ever stolen, lied, been driven by inappropriate desires, used God's name flippantly, or in any way failed to love God with all of your heart?

Then without Jesus you will die in your sins under the curse of the Law. Jesus is the only one who has ever kept God's Law, and He is the only one who can release you from the power of God's Law.

Believe on Jesus! And once you have received mercy through Jesus, let the Law teach you about holiness.

But never see the Law as a way to earn God's mercy and love, because those are free gifts given to all who trust Jesus!

What does this look like? Here is one example of how the Law teaches us about holiness:

Jesus taught that the entire Law boils down to loving God first and loving others as you love yourself (Matt 22:37-40). This teaching is also found in Deuteronomy 10:12-22. Now, looking at the Ten Commandments, we see that they start with loving God and continue to loving others.

Love God First 1. Have no other God, 2. Worship no image, 3. Respect God's name, 4. Keep the Sabbath holy.

And Love Others 5. Honor your father and mother, 6. Do not murder, 7. Do not commit adultery, 8. Do not steal, 9. Do not bear false witness, 10. Do not covet

Notice how the fourth commandment (Ex 20:8-11) is even a transition from loving God to loving others. Israel was to keep the Sabbath because God made it holy, but part of keeping it was to give everyone that worked for you a chance to rest as well. Matthew chapter 12, Romans chapter 14, and Colossians chapter 2 explain how the sabbath command relates to Christians.

This foundation of love is why the Bible says “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law (Rom 13:8).”

So, the Law teaches what holiness looks like when it comes to loving God: putting God first, not worshiping things, being careful about using His name, and setting aside holy time to meet with Him. The details vary from person to person, but the important thing is the starting point of love. The Law also sheds light on what loving others looks like. This is just one of many, many lessons that we can learn about love from the Law.

Don't make the Law your master, but use it as a resource to learn about God so that you can walk in closer fellowship with Him!

Let God's Law expose your sin, and teach you about holiness!