

## Romans

**Romans Chapter Seven**

**Romans 7: 12-13**

**July 25, 2010**

This is lesson number 50 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

### **The Theme of the Letter**

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

### **Title: “Therefore the Law is Holy”**

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.**

A “Therefore” always prepares us for what will be a summary of what has been previously given. After saying in verse 5 that the “passions of sin were aroused by the law,” it was necessary for the Apostle to make sure that no one would get the idea that there was anything wrong with the law.

Let’s be reminded that verses 7-13 the verb tense are in the past tense and most Greek scholars agree that Paul is relating how God used the law to give him an intimate and deep knowledge of sin. He is telling us how he came to cast off any notion that he was righteous before God by his keeping of the law. We will later show that this does not necessarily prove anything.

Paul really believed that he was blameless under the law of God. But when the law came in the power of the Holy Spirit he saw the real nature of sin and he died to pride and self-righteousness.

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This is Saul of Tarsus, the proud Pharisee, as he came to know Jesus Christ. Only then was he able to consider his personal righteousness as “filthy rags in God’s sight,” and rejoice in the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus.

So as we consider verses 12 and 13, we have this grand defense of the law.

“Sin is the source of evil which uses the law to provoke evil desires.” {Hodge}

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

There is an argument that “the law” in this verse refers to the whole law {moral code} and “the commandment” refers to the Tenth Commandment which Paul names in verse 7. But whatever is true of the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is true of the other nine. That’s why James says in 2:10-12:

**10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.**

This passage in James should destroy any notion that a person could be saved by keeping the law. When you fail at a single point at any time of your life you have transgressed the whole law.

**First, the commandment is holy.**

How could it be otherwise? The commandment is from God who is holy.

We should not try to rank the attributes of God in some sort of order of importance: His mercy, longsuffering, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, wrath, and love, etc.; but I think God’s holiness must be His chief attribute. If God were not holy, nothing else would matter.

Everywhere in the Bible, God is described as holy. The writing on the turban on the head of the high priest said, “**Holiness Unto the Lord.**” Ex 28:36-38.

In Revelation 4:8, before the throne of God: “**And they do not rest day or night saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.”**”

**In the second place the commandment is just.**

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Sin always tries to deceive us into thinking that God's commandment is not just or fair. How did Satan get Eve to even consider disobeying God?

"Did God say?" The clear implication of the question is that it would be unfair for God to create such a beautiful and tasty fruit and then forbid you to eat it. "Did God really say that?"

That is as up to date as {whatever the date may be}.

The lie is that God doesn't want us to have any fun.  
Forbidden things are attractive and even pleasant for a season.

Some of the popular slogans today spit in God's face.

"No fear!" "There is no fear of God before their eyes."  
"Question authority!" Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me."

God knows better than you and me what is best for His creatures. If He tells us in His Word that sex between unmarried men and women is wrong and sinful it is because His design for marriage is better than "shacking up."  
Is the term now "hooking up?"

**In the third place the commandment is good.**

All that is good for man is in the law. To love God more than self and to love your neighbor as much as yourself is the way to live a contented life.

That does not mean that you are guaranteed good health and all the money you desire. But you will learn to be content with what God gives you.

Do you love God's law, or are His commandments a burden to you?

Meditate on Psalm 119, on the Law of God, which has 176 verses, in 22 sets of 8, in an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet. Only three verses do not refer to the law. Synonyms such as precept, statute, judgments, testimonies, and commandment are used and only the Holy Spirit could do that and not be boring.

God's holy law will always promote what is best for you.

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

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William Hendriksen gives this summary of verse 12 in his commentary.

“Is it not a merciful arrangement that, by means of the first and second commandments, God warns against the evil of idolatry, with all the corruption, filth, disappointment, and grief that attends it? That by means of the fourth commandment he sets aside a much needed day of rest and worship for man? That by means of the fifth commandment he places the child under the rule, care, and protection of those who love him most? That by means of the seventh commandment he guards the sacredness of marriage, and by means of the sixth and the eighth, protects human life and property?”

“So it is made very evident that it was not the law, as such, but it was sin – in the present case Paul’s own sinfulness – that made it impossible for the law to make a person holy and happy. The commandment, operating by itself, never kills or even hurts anyone. It is sin that kills. It was sin that even deceived Paul, in his unconverted state, into thinking that he would be able to live in strict obedience to God’s law. It deceived him, ... until one day, in a very dramatic way, it was made clear to him that no matter how hard he tried, he would never, no never, be able thus to attain to the status of the righteousness of God.” {Hendriksen on Romans 1-8, page 222}

**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.**

Can I blame that which is good for my death? Certainly not!

“The true character of sin, as sin, is revealed by its making that which is itself good, the means of evil.” {Hodge}

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Several times now I have mentioned how in my private meditation on the Word of God a portion of Scripture will seem to perfectly support what I am preparing to preach about. This is the case with Psalm 19. The morning that I read Psalm 19, one of the professors at the Pastors School used it as the basis for his lecture on how to interpret the Bible. So as I was collecting my thoughts on the goodness of the law I recalled **Psalm 19**.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. 2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. 4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, 5 Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race. 6 Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. 12 **Who can understand his errors?** Cleanse me from secret faults. 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Resist any idea that the law is not good.

In our day it is not fashionable nor is it considered politically correct to press on people the holiness of God and His righteous wrath against sin. Many try to sidestep man's responsibility with, "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner." Yes, God loves sinners; else no one would be saved. But usually that little slogan is used to excuse sin itself in the sinner.

This one thing I know. Unless God the Holy Spirit confronts us with our personal sin and guilt, we will remain like Paul before the commandment came to him in the power of the Holy Spirit; a proud, religious, and lost soul.

Now I am not saying that everyone must have a "Damascus Road" experience, as did Saul of Tarsus. Neither am I saying that your experience must be the same as

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mine. But I am saying that there must be a reckoning before a holy God that you have no personal righteousness and you must depend only on the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

If you can't give a specific "experience" of salvation can you affirm that you deserve condemnation? Can you from the depth of your being declare that your only hope of eternal life is in the righteousness of Jesus Christ?

It is not what you experienced "back yonder" it is what you believe at this very moment!

Robert Murray McCheyne {1813-1843} describes his experience as well as others in this poem from Jeremiah 23:1-8:

### ***JEHOVAH TZIDKENU {JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS}***

**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 Tzidkenu was nothing to me.**

**I oft read with pleasure to sooth or engage,  
Isaiah's wild measure John's simple page;  
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,  
Jehovah Tzidkenu 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 Tzidkenu – 't was nothing to me.**

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

**My terrors all vanished before that sweet name,  
My guilty fear banished, with boldness I came  
To drink at the Fountain, life-giving and free:  
Jehovah Tzidkenu is all things to me.**

**Jehovah Tzidkenu! My treasure and boast;  
Jehovah Tzidkenu! I ne'er can be lost:**

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**In thee shall I conquer by flood and by field,  
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!**

**Even treading the valley, the shadow of death!  
This “watchword” shall rally my faltering breath;  
For while from life’s fever my God sets me free,  
“Jehovah Tzidkenu!” my death-song shall be.**

### **Jehovah Tzidkenu, God our Righteousness.**

And so, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

But we still have a problem.

How is it that that which is holy and just and good, can kill you?  
Is the law the cause of that spiritual death? No! Sin is the cause.  
God allows sin to use the law; but sin is the cause.

But why would God allow sin to use the law?

### ***So that sin may be seen for what it really is!***

#### ***Psalm 19 secret sins; presumptuous sin! Who can know his errors?***

Sin is deceitful. My problem and yours too, is recognizing sin.

“I am so sinful, that most of the time I don’t think I am sinful.” {Brimsmead}

This is what Paul means when he says, “... I would not have known sin except through the law.”

We have no idea of the sinfulness of sin. We do not like to consider just how sinful we are.

“Sin is so evil that the worst thing you can say about it is to call it by its own name, sinful sin.” {John Trapp}

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Lloyd-Jones warns preachers not to get lost in the details of a text, especially Romans Chapter Seven. Keep in mind that the grand purpose of Romans Seven is to show how God uses the law in dealing with the human race.

The charge that Paul is dealing with is that the law was not only useless but was, in fact, evil. That the law has no purpose or function at all. That mankind would have been better off if God had never given the law.

My unsolicited counsel to the adherents of New Covenant Theology is that they spend a fair amount of time in Romans Seven before they teach that the Law of Moses has been replaced by a “higher law” of Christ.

The law, yes the Law of Moses, reveals the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Paul said the same thing in Romans 3:19-20

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.

As I have said, this is where many go astray today because they do not understand the purpose of the law.

The written law was given long after sin was already in the world.

Grace in the gospel was known long before the law was given. Therefore grace does not follow law; Grace spans all of human history and the future.

Grace in the gospel was revealed to Adam when the blood of an animal was shed to cover Adam’s fig-leaf righteousness. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. But the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin; only the blood of Jesus propitiates God’s wrath.

Abraham believed the promises of God long before the written law; and Paul tells us in Galatians that the gospel was preached to Abraham. Abraham may not have known the details of a baby born to a virgin in a cow stable, but he knew about Substitution.

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The law came in alongside of sin and was given to specifically identify sin and to make a record of sin.

But hear this. The law was never intended as a means to be justified. One of the most popular doctrines in our day in America is the teaching that God dealt with the Jews in the Old Testament through law and that God deals with the church through grace.

Salvation is always and only by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ and in Him only.

Keeping the law did not save the Old Testament Jews. That is exactly what Paul is saying to us. If the law could have justified any Jew it would be Saul of Tarsus. But the law convicted this proud Pharisee that sin is exceedingly sinful and he says in another place that he is the chief of sinners.

The Old Testament saints looked forward to the promise of God to provide righteousness in the Christ. The New Testament saints look backward to the fulfillment of God's promise in the person of Jesus the Son of God.

So I ask you, has God ever used the law to convict you of sin?

Secret sins, presumptuous sins, the exceeding sinfulness of sin?

Are you still trying to earn God's favor by your personal morality and good works?

Have you found peace in Jesus Christ?

Put your trust in Jesus Christ.

**Jehovah Tzidkenu**