

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
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 - 5:1-11 Having been *justified*, we rejoice in hope of *God's glory*
 - 5:12-19 Adam failed to lead to glory; Christ shall succeed
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 - 6:1-7:25 Answering questions. *Since the law cannot justify...*
 - 6:1-14 *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*
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Is the Law Sin?

Romans, Part XXXIII

Romans 7:7-12

Stuart W. Bryan

I. A Tale of Two Smells

II. Reviewing Romans 5-8

Romans 7:7-12

⁷What 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.*" ⁸But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was dead*. ⁹I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰And the commandment, which *was to bring life*, I found to *bring death*. ¹¹For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*. ¹²Therefore the law *is holy*, and the commandment holy and just and good.

III. Is the Law sin?

A. Certainly not! (7a)

Paul has written that "*the _____ entered that the offense might abound*" (5:20), that Christians are not "*under _____*" but "*under grace*" (6:14) and that, prior to our conversion to faith in Jesus, our "*sinful passions were aroused by the _____*" (7:5). So is the law the problem?

B. The Law exposes our sinfulness (7b)

Paul insists, *on the contrary*, that the law is _____. The law exposes our sinfulness (7b) by reflecting God's holy character (12).

C. The Law exacerbates our sinfulness (9-11 cf. Jn 3:20)

Indeed, such is our sinfulness, that the law exacerbates our sinfulness; in itself, the law makes our situation worse. *Sin*, Paul insists, abuses *the law* and uses it to inflame our *evil desires*. Without *the law* our *sinfulness* settles, like sediment, on the bottom of a jar. We can begin to imagine that our *sin* isn't so bad. In the absence of the law, we can imagine ourselves to be _____, "*good people.*" The law dispels this illusion.

D. The Law is holy, just, and good

So, then, the law is not the problem; we are the problem. Leon Morris writes (283):

The law is holy (JB, "sacred"), which puts it as far away from sin as possible. The law is God's law, and it takes its character from him. He is holy ("Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty", Isa. 6:3), and his law accordingly is holy... It is also righteous or "just". It makes no unfair demands; it is equitable; it is not unjust in condemning sinners. And it is good. It has our welfare in mind, not our hurt. It is beneficent in its outlook and aim.

IV. The Law of the Lord is Perfect

A. God's Law Exposes God's Character

First, Paul insists that God's law is *holy, just, and good* – reflecting as it does the character of God Himself. Paul derived this teaching from the OT:

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. (Ps 19:7-11)

Used rightly by those who trust in the Lord and who have been forgiven by His grace, the law is a gift and a delight (Ps 119). “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Rom 3:31). How does faith establish the law?

- Justification by Faith establishes the perfection of the law.
- Justification by Faith establishes the redemptive purpose of the law.
- Justification by Faith establishes the perpetuity of the law.

B. God's Law Exposes Our Character (cf. Pr. 22:15;

The law, therefore, is not our problem. Our problem is our sinfulness which the law exposes: “...by the _____ is the knowledge of sin” (3:20).

C. God's Law Exposes our need for a Savior (7:24-25a)

Paul writes in Romans 7:9, “I was alive once apart from the law.” Leon Morris explains:

But he may mean apart from law, in the sense that there had been a time in his experience when he had not realized the force of the law's demands, a time when he was “under no conviction of sin” (Hendriksen). Elsewhere he himself refers to a time when he had been “blameless” as regards the righteousness of the law (Phil. 3:6). This will be not unlike the rich young ruler who, confronted with the law's demands, said, “All these I have kept since I was a boy” (Luke 18:21). Paul is referring to the life of the natural man, the happy pagan, the person who lives cheerfully with no reference to law and with an untroubled conscience. (Morris, 281)

But the law refuses to allow us to evaluate ourselves by looking horizontally at our neighbor; it forces us to evaluate ourselves by looking vertically to the character of God. In so doing, the law reveals our sin and takes away our excuses. However, if God is kind, the law also drives us to Christ for forgiveness. As Paul writes, “Therefore the _____ was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:24). And, “Christ is the end (telos) of the _____ for righteousness to all those who believe” (Rom 10:4).

So as we meditate on the law and worship the Lord who gave us the law, may the law remind us that the law is a gift to turn our eyes away from ourselves unto our Christ.

⁶Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. (Is 55:6-7)

V. Conclusion (2 Cor 3:18)