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## Is the Law to Blame for my Sin?

*Romans, Part XXXIV*

Romans 7:13-25, Part One

Stuart W. Bryan

### I. Mirror, Mirror on the Wall! (Jas 1:22-25)

James compares God’s law to a mirror – as a mirror, it reveals what kind of people we are. However, like other mirrors, the law is powerless to \_\_\_\_\_ who we are.

### II. Reviewing Romans 5-8

Romans 7:13–25

<sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup>For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. <sup>16</sup>If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. <sup>17</sup>But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. <sup>19</sup>For the good that I will to *do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not to *do*, that I practice. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I will not to *do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>21</sup>I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. <sup>23</sup>But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

### III. Is the Law to blame for my sin?

#### A. Certainly not! (13a cf. 6:1,15; 7:7)

The law \_\_\_\_\_ our sin for what it really is – rebellion against God and a twisting of our original glory. The law works such that our sin *becomes exceedingly sinful*.

#### B. Excursus: Who is the “I”?

In verses 14-25, Paul speaks *as a believer recounting his own struggle with his ongoing sinfulness*:

- i. Elsewhere in Romans, “I” means Paul himself – 1:8ff; 3:5; 6:19
- ii. Paul speaks throughout in the present tense – “*am*”, “*am doing*”, etc.
- iii. Paul describes his own *will* positively *contra* Romans 3:10-17
  - a. He *delights* in God’s law – 14a, 16b, 22, 25b *contra* 3:10-11
  - b. He *wills* to do the good – 15b, 18b, 19a, 21 *contra* 3:12
  - c. He *hates* to do evil – 15c, 19b *contra* 3:13-17
- iv. Paul qualifies his negative evaluation of his struggle
  - a. He notes that no good “*dwells in me (that is, in my flesh)*” – 18a
  - b. This helps explain, “*I am carnal, sold under sin*” – 14b.
  - c. His problem is his remaining *flesh* – 17, 18c, 20, 21a, 23, 25c
  - d. He continues to await complete glorification while in “*this body of death*,” his pre-resurrection body – 24 (cf. 8:23-25)

C. The Law exposes the character of believers as well (14-23 cf. Mk 14:38)

The law can no more bring believers to \_\_\_\_\_ than it could bring the Jews to glory. Only the grace of God in Christ can bring us to glory (cf. 5:20-21). Jesus must enable us to *walk in newness of life by His Spirit* (7:6).

D. Summary: Who will deliver us from this body of death? (24-25 cf. 5:8-9; Phil 1:6)

#### IV. The Deficiency of the Law

A. God's Law Exposes our Sinfulness as Believers

God's law, as holy, righteous, and good as it is (7:12), cannot lead us to glory. Why not? Because such is our sinfulness, even in our redeemed state, that apart from the grace of God all the law can do is condemn us and point out our sins and failures.

*"I am carnal, sold under sin,' [14b] is stated categorically and without qualification, not because this is the whole truth about Paul the Christian, but because it is the only part of the truth about himself that the law can tell him."* (J.I. Packer)

Yet, Paul *delights in the law of God in the inner man* (22a). He is **glad for its work exposing his \_\_\_\_\_ even as he is frustrated with his remaining \_\_\_\_\_.**

B. God's Law cannot Empower Transformation

God's law can point out where we fall short and point out the way to go, but it cannot get us there. The law cannot save us; it can only condemn us. Paul writes, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find"* (18). Hence, Jesus did not come as our great moral teacher; He came as our \_\_\_\_\_. *"Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (7:24-25a)

C. God's Law cannot bring Sinners to Glory (cf. Rom 8:3-4; Phil 2:12-13)

Paul's theme in chapters 5-8 is that *all those whom God \_\_\_\_\_, He shall most certainly \_\_\_\_\_.* So how shall He do it? Shall He do it by the law? No! The same grace that set us right with God through faith in Jesus must transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 1:17; Gal 3:1-3). Hence Paul commanded the Philippians:

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Only God's Spirit can transform the law of God into an instrument of glorification:

*<sup>3</sup>For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

#### V. Conclusion