

I. Introduction

A. Overview: 7:7-25

1. Answering the question, "what's wrong with the Law?" not necessarily our struggle with sin.
2. He's said some pretty negative stuff about the Law and its ability to do good in our lives
3. Romans 7:5 is the springboard for this next section as a culmination of that "negativity." *For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. (Romans 7:5)*
4. To these faithful Jewish Christians, it would seem that Paul is demoting the Law and making light of their heritage and the faith of their fathers.
5. \*What Paul will unpack here is that the Law was never able to solve the problem of sin and death but it's not the Law's fault.

B. Clarification

1. Paul's focus is the Law that God gave to Moses at Mt. Sinai in Exodus and what is unpacked in the rest of the Torah, not general societal laws.
2. However, there is a principle of law that defines its effectiveness.
  - a. The Law and societal laws can only affect outward behavior and do not, by their very nature, change the heart.
  - b. In fact, the impact on the heart more often than not is that laws harden hearts rather than soften hearts.
  - c. \*This is why God's plan from the moment of rebellion was not to give humanity a book of laws but to give humanity a relationship with Jesus and then be indwelt by the Holy Spirit because relationships are what result in transformation.
  - d. \*If you want to see someone change it will be through long, hard, joy-filled relationship.

II. What's wrong with the Law?

A. The reasonable extent of the Law

*What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." (Romans 7:7)*

1. If it wasn't for the Law, I wouldn't have known sin - it gave sin a face and a name.
2. Paul's use of language, first person
  - a. Not necessarily talking about himself solely, but a type of person he includes himself with
  - b. Impersonation: assuming a posture and character from a specific vantage point, namely, his faithful Jewish kinsmen, without suggesting that he is better than them
  - c. In this sense, he is saying we are all in this together because this is universal.

- d. For example, the 10th Commandment, coveting. Not that he has never experienced it without the Law but that the Law gives this experience identity, "Oh, that's what this desire is."

B. Sin's next move

*But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. (Romans 7:8)*

1. Sin, now identified, took advantage of the limitations of the Law and what resulted was not setting us free from sin but seemed to produce more identifiable sin in our lives.
2. May not fully understand how this works, but we are all familiar with this experientially
3. Good way to understand this
  - a. The Law of Moses is good, but it is also powerless.
  - b. The Gospel (grace) is good, and it is powerful.
  - c. The powerlessness of the Law makes it a slave to the hand that yields it - like any tool.
  - d) The Gospel is powerful in and of itself and has the ability to withstand sin's attempts to use it wrongly.
4. *For apart from the Law, sin lies dead. (Roman 7:8b)*
  - a. Can't mean that sin didn't exist before the Law was given to Moses
  - b. A lot of discussion on this phrase and very little agreement
  - c. My hot take:  
\*Sin loses its power apart from the Law because the Law cannot humanly be kept so we are informed of a no-win situation. Formerly we were oblivious to our condemnation but now we have no excuse. We were condemned either way but now sin uses the Law to bring hopelessness and says, "You might as well live it up." If only there was a person who could perfectly keep the Law and take our hopelessness and our real guilt and set us free from sin and death; now that would be something!

C. Review of what happened when the Law was given

*I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. (Romans 7:9-11)*

1. Paul is referencing Moses, Mt Sinai, and the giving of the Law.
2. Review of Israel and Mt Sinai (Exodus 19-20)
  - a. Sinning before the Law, nothing to point to but knew that they were in rebellion
  - b. Law given, but did it set free from sin? No, it condemned what they already knew was rebellion.
  - c. Sin capitalized on the Law and people died in their sin and rebellion.
3. Sin's devious nature: takes the opportunity through the commandment, deceives me and then leaves me for dead (see Eve in the garden).
4. Was all this the Law's fault?

D. God's righteous Law

*So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:12)*

1. The Law is communicating God's holiness, His righteousness, and His goodness.
2. It is a step in leading us to life but it is not the conclusive step because it cannot put sin to death.
  - a. The Law had a temporary job to do until the Messiah arrived  
*Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Galatians 3:19-22)*
  - b. Following the Law (or any law for that matter) is not the ultimate purpose for humankind. Surrender to and intimacy with King Jesus is the ultimate purpose for humankind.
3. Paul agrees with Psalm 1, 19, and 119.  
*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)*  
*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving 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 rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. (Psalm 19:7-10)*

### III. Application and observation

#### A. We need to know/identify sin.

1. It is good to know our sin.
  - a. Saddened by it, the pain it comes with, self-destruction resulting from it
  - b. Hope and faith and joy and peace and love come partly from knowing our sin.
  - c. Evidence of sin right now: Some of you may have interpreted what I just said to mean that you should experiment with sin. Just toy with it a little so you know what it feels like. And you've either been tempted to embrace that or you've been tempted to dismiss me as someone who isn't true to God's Word.
  - d. \*Clearly, that's not what I meant nor what I even said, but that is the devious nature of sin. Let me punch back at sin and say that you don't need to experiment with sin because God generously gave you His Law clearly in Scripture. Sin already has a face and a name without you needing to experiment.
2. Truth and righteousness matter but we become holy through an exchanged life, not obedience to a law.
  - a. The Law is holy, righteous, good, and just.
  - b. It matters that we recognize the difference between right and wrong in light of Scripture, defined by God alone.

- c. And, at the same time, recognizing and even behaving according to that revelation will not make you or me holy. It is only when we have surrendered our lives and pursue intimacy with Christ followed by obedience do we have a transformed life now and eternal life with Christ when we see Him face to face. Our salvation and sanctification are dependent on Jesus, not the Law. Only Jesus gives us a new heart.