

Deceived by Sin and Killed

Romans 7:7-13

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Introduction: It was Jesus Himself who said....

Matthew 6:24 ²⁴ "No one can serve **two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.

But every descendant of Adam is born into this world as a slave to sin. It is our nature to sin and no child ever needs to be taught how to do it. Based on Christ's principle of "one master only," Paul said this about sin...

Romans 6:20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

At Sinai God gave the Jews His good and perfect law which they soon saw as the tool they would use, in their own strength, to liberate themselves from sin. Compliance with the Law seems simple at first. "We just honor the Ten Commandments and we are no longer sinners," they told themselves. But history soon proved otherwise. Israel gave lip service to the Law...even outwardly kept its precepts, but the power of sin in their lives was not broken. Isaiah records God's complain about it....

Isaiah 29:13 ¹³ Then the Lord said, "..... this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*,

And this remained their religious mindset right up until the time of Christ. Jesus complained that they had made The Law an end in itself. Believing that The Law would give them eternal life rather than the God of the Law.

John 5:39-40 ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

Jesus even quoted Isaiah to them. The past 500 years had only made them more entrenched in their self-righteousness.

Matthew 15:7-9 ⁷ "You hypocrites, **rightly did** Isaiah prophesy of you: ⁸ 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁹ 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

The place of the Law was the subject of epic struggles in the first Century. Even today there is vast confusion about it. Some Christians have sought to completely return to it...even keeping Saturday as the Sabbath, eating Kosher and condemning Sunday worship as "The Mark of The Beast." Others believe they have license to break any of the commandments because they are no longer under their authority. What IS the place

of “The Law” in the lives of born again Christian men and women? Paul has already taught us that the purpose of The Law was never to make men righteous. It was given to expose and condemn their sin. To bring self-righteous sinners back to Himself. But those same self-righteous ones used it as a substitute for God in the same way religions use their membership, rituals and doctrines today. God’s verdict is pretty clear....

Romans 3:20 ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Having established that The Law cannot save anyone, Paul deals with the rebuttal of Gospel opponents which is....”If grace and faith replace the Law men will sin wildly.” But, Paul explains..... when God saves any person, they are united spiritually to Jesus Christ, the sinless one.” The power of sin that enslaved them is broken and they become slaves of Christ....who said....”No man can serve two masters.” Grace breaks sins bondage removing you from your hopeless place of condemnation by The Law and uniting you to Christ and His Eternal life. Union with Christ is the one thing in Creation that will break the power of sin in a person’s life.

Romans 6:14 ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Paul further explains what he means in Rom. 6:14 by “not under the law.”

Romans 7:4 ⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Paul had just used the illustration of how death cancels a lawful marriage. This is what happens when God brings us to Christ by Grace through faith. We die to The Law’s condemning authority in our lives SO THAT....we might be joined to another master....One who has risen from the dead. He will cause us to bear fruit for God. This morning we want to answer another question that is often posed. Does this mean that the Law of Moses is bad? Is it sin? Let’s go on now in Romans 7 at verse 7.

Romans 7:7-13 ⁷ What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." ⁸ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰ and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹ for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³ Therefore did that which is good become *a cause of* death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

- The Law reveals sin to sinners. [7-9]
- The Law promised life but gave death. [10-11]
- The Law is holy, righteous and good [12]
- The Law fulfilled its purpose by showing how sinful we are [13]

The Law reveals sin to sinners. [7-9]

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! [7a]: Paul is arguing with gospel critics. The opponents are not there so Paul is voicing their criticism and answering it at the same time. It started out with “shall we sin that grace may increase?” In 6:15 it is “shall we sin because we are not under the law but grace?” The charge now is that Paul is saying the “Law is sin!” How did we get here?

God says, “it is not that we shouldn’t sin that grace may increase! It is that we cannot sin that grace may increase.” This does not mean that we never sin it means that the person who has been spiritually united to Christ is NO LONGER a slave to sin. They want to know how “not to sin” rather than how much sin they can commit.

Rom. 6:14 opened another whole can of worms. Under inspiration, Paul teaches that The Law provokes us to sin by revealing the righteousness of God to men who are enemies of God and want to be free of Him. It gives specific ways that men can rebel directly against what God wants and who God is.

Romans 7:5 ⁵ while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

So the response from the self-righteous....”You must be saying that the Law itself is sin!”

On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." [7b]: Not at all! But we do need The Law to know what sin is. This is becoming increasingly obvious in our culture where people don’t even know it is sin to lie or steal anymore. Honor your parents....are you kidding me? They actually have laws against that in some places. Who knows that they should not desire to take what belongs to another or covet? Now... how has this generation come to this place. It is relatively simple to answer:

America banned God’s Law. In 1948 specific times in school for prayer were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. In 1962 they upheld the ban on prayer and in 1963 the court outlawed Bible reading. Finally, in 1980 they removed the 10 commandments from all public schools. The result...just what the Scripture talks about here. Everyone under 50 has never heard God acknowledged by prayer in school. They have never heard the Bible read and most have never cast an accidently glance at the summary of The Law to see that they should not kill, lie, steal and commit sexual sin.

Paul said that he learned that his heart and behavior was sinful through The Law of God. SO...the law, just as Scripture says....reveals sin to men who all....by the way....imagine

themselves to be “just fine the way they are.” Everyone thinks they are a good person. Just ask them! So Paul says...The Law is not sin. It reveals sin!

But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. [8]: But sin rules the life of every human until Christ breaks its power and becomes our Lord. Paul uses himself here to describe this warfare. He is not saying that this happened to him so be careful it does not happen to you. He is saying this happens to all men. This is an expansion of what he has already said.

Romans 7:5 ⁵ for while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

God says that men are born in sin and under its control. We are sons and daughters of Adam and we are dead to Christ and the Father. Forbidden fruit is a real thing in this fallen world. Our natures apart from Christ are bristling with rebellion. Show us something to rebel against and we will want to do it. It was the presence of the commandment “not to covet” that provokes men to covet.

I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; [9]: Again...everyone thinks they are okay. People will lie, gossip and slander with impunity...they don't think it is wrong until they know the commandments of God. I sat having a cup of coffee the other day while I listened to two employees of Walmart just rip several other co-workers to shreds. They maligned them as lazy and worthless and their supervisors for not recognizing their own value. It was 10 minutes of pure sin and neither of them had a clue. That ignorant bliss is not possible for you, because God has exposed you to His Righteous Law!

James 3:6-10 ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰ from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

Would it be better if we just never told anyone about God and His righteousness? There are those who advocate for this. They believe that the pagan peoples of the world are not lost and us going out there to tell them about Christ just condemns them when they reject it. This is a topic for another day, but believe me when I say....The Scripture makes it absolutely crystal that all men are lost and in need of Christ. SO what does “I was once alive apart from the Law” mean? There are a couple of possible ways to understand this.

- Paul might mean that there was a time when he did not realize that the Law was not just a document to be read and memorized and so did not realize that it was speaking to him.

- He might have meant that he once believed he was keeping it perfectly. He did tell the Philippians, speaking of himself, that.....

Philippians 3:6as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

The rich young ruler believed this about himself and even said directly to Jesus....

Luke 18:21 "All these things I have kept from *my youth*."

But Paul is not just giving his own testimony or experience in this chapter. He is using a first person narrative to explain the relationship between all men and the Law. Leon Morris comments.

“Paul is referring to the life of the natural man, the happy pagan, the person who lives cheerfully with no reference to The Law and with an untroubled conscience. He is not alive with the life that the New Testament writers so often speak about. He is alive in the sense that he has never been put to death as a result of a confrontation with the law of God. His lack of remorse and his enjoyment of the evil he does make up a sorry imitation of that life which is life indeed. But Paul is emphasizing that the Law puts the sinner to death. The person of whom he is writing has not died as a result of a confrontation with the Law. In that sense he is alive.” *Leon Morris*

The Law promised life, but gave death. [10-11]

This commandment, which was to result in life [1a]: Paul means that the commandment was supposed to give life. In fact there are several places where it says as much in Scripture.

Leviticus 18:5 ⁵ 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD.

Ezekiel 20:11 ¹¹ "I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live.

Proved to result in death for me [10]: Actually... it brought death to me....But the key thing to notice here is the added requirement that men must do and observe the commandments in order to live. Paul did not observe them...even though as we will see later in this chapter.... he wanted to and agreed with God that they were good and righteous.

“from these verses, it seems fair to conclude that the law would have given life had it been perfectly obeyed. In this sense the law “promises life,” even though God did not give it with this intention---for He, of course, knew that the power of sin made it impossible for any human being to fulfill the law and so attain the promised life. Thus, although the commandment was “unto life,” this same commandment “proved to be” a cause of death...” *Douglas Moo*

Sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. [11]: Sin is not just the individual sins that you commit. It is the all-encompassing human condition and nature. It is how all men are born. It is sometimes called the flesh having no reference to our humanity but to our fallen, sinful nature. Paul calls it the “Natural man” in I Corinthians 2:14, who cannot and does not want to understand the things of God. It is our hopeless condition in Adam and it has corrupted every fiber of our being in some way...our emotions, our intellect, our will and our physical bodies. This sin pursues all men to the grave and then into a Christless eternity in hell.

1 Corinthians 15:22 ²² For as **in Adam all** die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Humanity’s response to The Law was and still is usually rebellion but there is an even more dangerous response. It is religion, ritual, moralism and self-righteousness. It calls men to be good and to perform religious and moral works as a means to salvation. We are surrounded by these things. Every major cult and Roman Catholicism all issue the call to works righteousness. They promise life without faith in Christ alone. According to Paul in Galatians, works righteousness is a work of the flesh and therefore of Sin. This is the deception of Sin: It promises life through Law keeping and self-righteous moralism. Paul is speaking to Law keepers here not to drunks and the sexually immoral...To religious, moral, self-righteous law keepers!!!

Galatians 5:4 ⁴ You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:13 ¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:17 ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

This might be sin’s greatest deception...”You can do it by yourself by being the good person you know yourself to be.” Nothing I can think of will damn a person more profoundly than this. This is exactly what Jesus was talking about when He said to the Pharisees and Scribes....

Matthew 23:15 ¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a **son of hell** as yourselves.

Douglas Moo observes this about our text...

“from these verses, it seems fair to conclude that the law would have given life had it been perfectly obeyed. In this sense the law “promises life,” even though God did not give it with this intention---for He, of course, knew that the power of sin made it impossible for any human being to fulfill the law and so attain the promised life. Thus,

although the commandment was “unto life,” this same commandment “proved to be” a cause of death...” *Douglas Moo*

The Law is holy, righteous and good [12]

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. [12]: Paul affirms now rather than defends the Law. Holy means unique in every way. Like God Himself there is nothing else like it in Creation. Righteous means just and conforming to what is true and right and good means endowed with every moral and intrinsic goodness that exists. David extolled and worshiped God through honoring His Law...

Psalm 19:7-11 ⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts 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; they are righteous altogether. ¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

John MacArthur makes this observation:

“The fact that the law reveals, arouses, and condemns sin and brings death to the sinner does not make the law itself evil. When a person is justly convicted and sentenced for murder, there is no fault in the law or with those responsible for upholding it. The fault is in the one who broke the law.” *John MacArthur*

The Law fulfilled its purpose by showing how sinful we are [13]

Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? [13a]: Again, Paul heads off Gospel opponents before they can object. Are you saying Paul, that something good is the cause death? How can something holy righteous and good be the cause of our condemnation?

May it never be! Rather it was sin. [13b]: The answer is that it doesn't. The Law is the revelation of God's holiness, righteousness and goodness. Sin, also called the natural man cannot keep the law. It is our nature in Adam to rebel against God and to break His law. Even those, who sincerely want to be good, cannot attain to the righteous standard of God's Law. Paul, speaking as a devout Jew about pagan gentiles has already made this point and given the Biblical conclusion....

Romans 3:9-10 ⁹ Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

In order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good [13c]: This is a classic tactic of sin. In the case of The Law, and moralism, it takes what is absolutely good and uses it to kill. MacArthur returns to the analogy of the courtroom saying...

“It is not the law against murder but the committing of murder that merits punishment. The law itself is good; it is the breaking of it that is evil. How much more is God’s law good, and how much more evil is the breaking of it.” *John MacArthur*

So that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful [13d]: There is no person more spiritually helpless and hopeless than the self-righteous or religious. They do not see recognize the enemy of their soul. Many Bible believing Christians have told me that they have never thought of themselves a sinners when they read the Bible.

Chapter seven is here to show the depth of our sin and expose who we are to the white hot righteousness of God seen in the Law. How do we fare? Have we kept His Laws and loved His commands? Hardly! Will religion and morality balance that scale? Not even remotely! When we are done here may we cry out with Paul....

Romans 7:24-25 ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

CONCLUSION: This is why this chapter matters to you! Jesus Christ was born alive to God not dead. He sidestepped Adam’s sin through His virgin conception. He was fully human but without sin. He did keep The Law and was absolutely unworthy of death. But He did die. He died for you so that you would live.

By grace through faith The Holy Spirit has placed you into life giving union with Jesus. You have eternal life...that means that your life has been united to the Life of God. What is true of Christ is now true of you. Every sin and failure of your life is swallowed up in Christ and you, having no righteousness of your own, are alive in Christ.

Stop trying to please God in your own strength. Instead draw near to Christ bringing nothing but your need. He will fill you with joy, peace and love. He will renew your love for Him....Ask Him to do it. There is no prayer more certain to be answered. Bring your sin struggles and exchange them for His Lordship in your life. What else could Jesus have intended when He said...

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰ "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."