

The True Function of God's Law

(Rom 7:7)

I. Context

A) Remember it is the doctrine of Rom 5:12-21 that is the cause of Rom ch 6-7

1. Based upon Paul's teaching, a man (especially the Jew) would be inclined to say: "Then you have negated the law and there is now no standard to control man's behavior"
 - i. This was Rome's accusation against Luther
 - ii. The Jew believed it was the law that always guaranteed man's holiness, so then we must have the law
 - a) Paul's answer is "no, the law never made anyone holy, in fact it does just the opposite"

B) Paul now goes on to show that the gospel doesn't dismiss the law of God, but is instead the only thing that has ever made it possible for man to obey it

II. Mechanics

A) Rom ch 1-4- No man can be justified by the law

B) Rom ch 5-8- No man can be sanctified by the law

1. Rom ch 6- Paul deals with objection of antinomianism
2. Rom ch 7- Paul deals with the relationship of the law to the Christian
 - i. Rom 7:1-6- Main statement- The Christian has been put into an entirely new relation to law
 - a) This is essential if any man is ever to bring forth fruit unto God
 - ii. Rom 7:7-13- Paul's vindication of the law
 - iii. Rom 7:14-25- Paul's demonstration of this in practice
 - a) Both sections from v.7 to v.25 are really just an elaboration of the main statement in v.1-v.6
 - b) And both are also in support of the statement of Rom 5:10

C) Having believed justification by faith, the Christian must be on guard against bringing the law back in the same way as before and applying it to sanctification

III. Doctrine

A) Rom 7:7- New objection introduced

1. "Well then, what you're saying then Paul is that the law is bad or is sin"
 - i. "You've already attacked and maligned the law 2 times now:"
 - a) Rom 5:20- "The law entered (came in by the side)"
 - b) Rom 6:14- "You are not under the law"
 - ii. "Now you've had strike 3, having claimed the law caused sin!"

- a) “Not under the law” 1st and then “not under sin”, so according to you “law” = “sin”
- 2. Paul now answers this objection by using the example of his own relationship to the law, before and after salvation
- B) Objection answered
 - 1. Paul says “on the contrary; far from teaching the law is sin, I am saying it is holy and good and necessary, and I thank God for it, because”:
 - i. I had not known sin without the law
 - a) He doesn’t mean that man without the law doesn’t know of his sin, he refutes that already in ch 1
 - b) He is saying “I didn’t truly realize the nature and depravity of sin”
 - 1) He here (v.7-25) expounds the point of Rom 3:20
 - c) The lost know “of sin” but they do not truly understand it and their position under it, and therefore do not truly seek the Savior
 - 1) This is why the Puritans, Whitefield, Edwards, etc. would start their preaching with they called the “preliminary law work”
 - ii. I had not known lust except by the law
 - a) Concupiscence- “desire for that which is forbidden”
 - b) Lust- “Desire” (this is a neutral term and must be decided by the context whether it is evil or good)
 - 1) Luke 22:15- “With great desire I have desired to eat this Passover”
 - c) The 10th commandment is unique to the others, it goes inward to the heart and desire within us
 - 1) Paul is saying “I would not have known that desire for sin is sin itself if not for the 10th commandment”
 - 2) This is typical of the Pharisees, who thought of sin only in the sense of the outward act (Matt 23)
 - (a) This is what the first chapter of the Sermon on the Mount is all about
 - (b) The law is love for God and to our neighbor, which is inward, and then the outward flows from it
 - (c) But man cannot love God unless God reveals Himself to man, and that by the Spirit and in the person and sacrifice of His Son
 - (d) Thus Paul could have no true understanding of the law as a Pharisee
 - iii. I had never known the power of sin over me without the law (10th commandment)
 - a) “Known”- 2 different Greek words are used in Rom 7:7

- 1) *Ginosko*- “to perceive, to apprehend, to be aware of”
- 2) *Eido*- “to experience, to understand by familiarity and use”
- b) The law brought Paul to see not only what is sin, but also to see the terrible presence and power of lust in his own life
 - 1) “I had never realized the truth about me with only the 1st knowledge, it takes the 2nd as well”
 - (a) Like a cancer test: knowledge of deadly cancer is one thing, but being made aware that I have it and am dying is another
 - (1) The cancer test that shows me this is not evil or bad, but it a very good thing
- 2. To desire an evil thing is sin, or to desire to sin is sin
 - i. Sin acts within us, in our imagination and will
 - ii. Matt 5:28- “Committed adultery already in his heart”
 - iii. Luke 16:15- “You justify yourselves, but God sees the heart”
- 3. We must be made to see the main function of the law is spiritual
 - i. The law shows man has a spiritual problem with God, not simply a physical one
 - ii. John 3:3-6- Must be born of the Spirit
 - 1) This is exactly what Paul is teaching, that we must be put into a new relationship to God and His law, for our relationship to God by nature is in wrath, and our relation to law by nature is condemnation