

The Book of Romans

The Gospel of God

Is the Law Sin?

- How did the law, which is holy and good, come to be such a negative force in the history of salvation?

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.

⁶ But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that in which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

(Romans 7:5-6)

7:5 – Developed and expanded in 7:7-25

7:6 – Developed and expanded in 8:1-17

7:7-25 – The fallen human being confronted with the law

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 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 might become utterly sinful.

(Romans 7:7-13)

Function of the Law (7:7-13)

- The law reveals sin ("utterly sinful")
 - example of "coveting" – goes to the heart of the law and to the heart of the fallen human being in rebellion against God
 - the "I" is Paul (and every person) in the figure of Adam – Adam's sin is reenacted in each and every person confronted with the law

¹⁴ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of fleshly, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I will *to do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ But if I do the very thing I do not will *to do*, I agree with the Law, that is good. ¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know the good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. ¹⁹ For the good that I will, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not will. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not will, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

²¹ Therefore I find this law: that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 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!

So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

(Romans 7:14-25)

Function of the Law (7:14-25)

- The law exposes the sinner
 - sin dwells in the human being and does so in such a way that it is inseparable from our person
 - explains how through the commandment sin becomes “utterly sinful”

Function of the Law (7:14-25)

“We know that the law is spiritual but I am fleshly, sold under sin” (7:14)

- this is not a description of Paul's Christian experience, even though it remains his experience as a Christian
- Paul does not describe a struggle with sin but a battle that is hopelessly lost – our “wretched” condition apart from Christ

Function of the Law (7:14-25)

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!*