

# A Defense of the Law

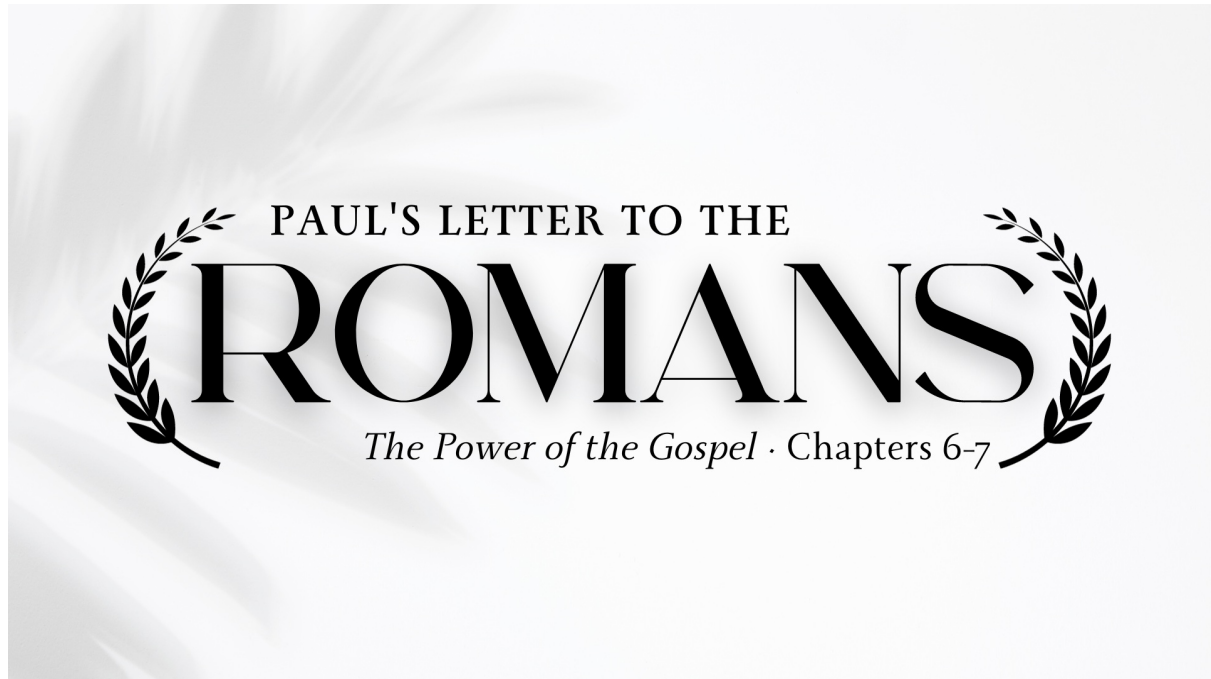
## Romans 7:7-13

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Part of Paul's Letter to the Romans Romans 6-7

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*Moses wrote this about being put right with God by obeying the Law: “Whoever obeys the commands of the Law will live.” (Leviticus 18:5)*

*—Romans 10:5 (TEV)*

## **The Law Can Never Be *How* We Are Saved, But, Instead, The Law...**

- **reveals sin.**

*For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.*

*—Romans 3:20 (NLT)*

- **condemns the sinner.**

*...[the law's] purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.*

—Romans 3:19 (NLT)

- **defines sin as transgression.**

*...but where there is no law there is no transgression.*

—Romans 4:15 (ESV)

- **brings wrath.**

*For the law brings wrath...*

—Romans 4:15 (ESV)

- **was brought in so that the trespass might increase.**

*Now the law came in to increase the trespass...*

—Romans 5:20 (ESV)

*But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law...*

—Romans 3:21 (NLT)

*So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.*

—Romans 3:28 (NLT)

*Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.*

—Romans 3:31 (NLT)

*Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with*

*God that comes by faith.*

—Romans 4:13 (NLT)

**It might seem to Paul's Roman readers, as well as to many today, that the law serves no purpose for salvation and can just be dismissed.**

*...you are not under law, but under grace.*

—Romans 6:14 (NIV)

*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." But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. 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. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.*

—Romans 7:7-13 (ESV)

**The most common understanding of Paul's use of first-person pronouns in this passage is that he is talking about himself, but he's also universalizing his experience so that it applies to Adam, to Israel and to us today.**

## **PAUL TELLS US WHAT THE LAW DOES:**

### **1. The law reveals sin.**

Paul is probably identifying which sin God first used to convict him that he was sinning - "covetousness."

*...And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.*

*—Philippians 3:6 (NLT)*

Paul had considered himself to be faultless, and so it was only as God began to use the “law” to work on him that he finally realized, recognized and admitted that he, too, was a sinner.

*The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil.*

*—Genesis 6:5 (NLT)*

Until we see sin as God sees it, we aren’t dealing with reality about the world or ourselves.

*... “No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.”*

*—Romans 3:10-12 (NLT)*

Paul could face and acknowledge his sins because he had come to have faith in Jesus’ death on the cross that paid the price for his sins, enabling God to forgive him and restore him.

## **2. The law provokes sin.**

*... the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death.*

*—Romans 7:5 (NLT)*

*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 (ESV)*

“opportunity” (Greek) = a military base, “the starting-point or base of operations for an expedition,” the springboard for going forward

Sin establishes a base or foothold in us by means of the

“commandment” which provokes us.

Sin is so insidious because we often believe we should be able to control it, that we don't have to give in to it because we're rational beings.

*We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.*

— Celebrate Recovery ministry's First Step

We can deny this all we want, but our lives will not change, nor will we find any freedom in this life from sin, until we come to grips with the addictive reality of sin.

Paul is saying that our sin nature loves to rebel, to do the opposite of whatever we're told.

*There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it and carry our spoils away. We took off a huge load of pears — not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply in order to become a thief. The only feast I got was a feast of iniquity, and that I enjoyed to the full. What was it that I loved in that theft? Was it the pleasure of acting against the law, in order that I, a prisoner under rules, might have a maimed counterfeit of freedom by doing what was forbidden, with a dim similitude of impotence?... The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing.*

—St. Augustine (Confessions)

The problem isn't the law but sin, which works against God's law at every opportunity, in very deceptive ways.

### 1. **The law condemns sin.**

*I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.*

—Romans 7:9 (ESV)

*The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.*

—Romans 7:10 (ESV)

Paul realizes that the law, which he thought was making him righteous, has, instead, condemned him because he really is sinning.

*For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.*

—Romans 7:11 (ESV)

Now that Paul sees sin's deception, he recognizes it can't offer what it promises, and it pushes him to be ready and able to hear the Good News about the Savior.

Paul has recognized that it is sin itself, our sinful nature, which uses the law to deceive us into sinning, which instead of blessing us ultimately leads to death.

*So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

—Romans 7:12 (ESV)

*Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.*

—Romans 7:13 (ESV)

Paul says in vss. 8 and 11 that sin seizes the "opportunity" to produce sin and death.

*Take a criminal today. A man is caught red-handed breaking the law. He is arrested, brought to trial, found guilty and sentenced to prison. The criminal cannot blame the law for his imprisonment. True, it is the law which convicted and sentenced him. But the criminal has no-one to blame but himself and his own criminal*

*behaviour. In a similar way Paul exonerates the law. "The villain of the piece is sin", indwelling sin which, because of its perversity, is aroused and provoked by the law... Our real problem is not the law, but sin. It is indwelling sin which accounts for the weakness of the law, as the apostle will go on to show in the next paragraph. The law cannot save us because we cannot keep it, and we cannot keep it because of indwelling sin.*

*—John R.W. Stott*

The very nature of the law, which is good and points to how God wants us to live our lives, is used by sin to deceive us into thinking that we can save ourselves.

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**Next Week:** *Romans 7:14-25*