

Romans Part 17 (7:7 – 7:13)

--INTRO:

--in Romans 7:7-13 Paul continues to develop the subject of sanctification while addressing further objections from legalistic Jews about the role of the law.

--Romans is Paul's most thorough explanation of the gospel, but his refutation of arguments from legalistic Jews throughout Romans results in extra content and complexity.

--10 times throughout Romans (in tonight's passage is the 6th and 7th occurrence) Paul presents a rhetorical question that Jews would raise and answers it with the emphatic phrase "certainly not!" (Romans 3:4; 3:6; 3:31; 6:2; 6:15; 7:7; 7:13; 9:14; 11:1; 11:11)

--RESTORING THE TRUE PURPOSE OF THE LAW...

--the Mosaic Law has a strategic purpose in God's master plan, but the spiritual battle for truth is such that the very people who were supposed to be stewards of the law ended up sabotaging and distorting the very purpose of the law.

--**God gave us the law not for us to follow perfectly but to show us that we can't follow it perfectly**, in order to lead us to Christ and through Him receive "**the righteousness of God apart from the law...**" (Romans 3:21)

--Galatians 3:24-25: "the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

--**but legalistic Jews cheapened and externalized the requirements of the law** and brought them down to a level that they thought they could follow and thereby earn salvation.

--in Matthew 23:23-38, the Author of the Law sets straight those who corrupted the law; Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have **neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith**. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who **strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!** 25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For **you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence**. [*again, they focused on external ritual and ignored the inner reality*] 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so **you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**" (Matthew 23:23-28)

--so they thought they had made themselves righteous through their corrupt version of the law, but when God looked at them He saw straight through the facade to "hypocrisy and lawlessness" in them.

--before Paul was saved, he was one of those Pharisees that Jesus would condemn, and in Romans 7:8-11 Paul explains his own personal experience striving to be righteous through a corrupt version of the law. Some of the finer details in Paul's explanation are debatable, but the following gives the general idea...

--Romans 7:8-11: "But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment [*in Paul's life before he was saved, sin, in a sense, hijacked the commandments and corrupted them*], produced in me all manner of evil desire

[through Paul's corrupt version of the commandments as a Pharisee sin produced in him "all manner of evil desire" while on the surface he appeared righteous].

For apart from the law sin was dead.

[without a true understanding of the law, Paul didn't realize that he was sinful before God; to him the sin problem separating him from God was dead – "sin was dead"]

9 I was alive once without the law

[without a true understanding of the law, he thought he was righteous – "alive" – in God's eyes],

but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

[that is, when he finally saw the true standard of the law, he realized he was sinful before God – "sin revived" – and his hope that he could achieve salvation through the law died – "I died"]

10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me."

[the commandments, which sin "deceived" him into thinking were the way to reach eternal "life", in and of themselves, without forgiveness through Christ, left him eternally separated from God in spiritual "death"]

--earlier in Romans 7:5 Paul summarized the dynamic that he explained in 7:8-11.

--in the words of Romans 7:5... when Paul was "in the flesh", that is, in a pre-salvation state (without faith), "sinful passions" in his life were "aroused by the law." Without having saving faith, rather than make Paul more righteous the law ended up making him more sinful.

(note that Jesus specified that the Pharisees had no faith: "...you have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith..." –Matthew 23:23)

--in response to Paul's explanation that the law provides opportunity for sin (as described in Romans 7:5 and 7:8-11) legalistic Jews might ask the questions that Paul rhetorically states and then answers in Romans 7:7 and 7:13...

--Romans 7:7a: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! ..."

--Romans 7:13a: "Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! ..."

--after both of these rhetorical questions, Paul then explains that the true purpose of the law in its original form (not the butchered form of the Pharisees) is to make us aware of our sin and consequent need for salvation in Christ.

--Romans 7:7: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, **I would not have known sin except through the law.** For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"

--Paul purposely states an example from the ten commandments that is internal (opposed to the external commandments that the Pharisees focused on: *you shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, take the Lord's name in vain, ...*)

--Romans 7:13: "Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, **so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.**"

--think of sin as being like a stain in the carpet and the law as a light shining on the carpet... without the light, the room is dark then it's hard to see the stain, but when you turn the light on the stain becomes as clear as day – "sin... become[s] exceedingly sinful."

--Romans 3:19-20: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, **that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.** 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

--in Luke 18:9-14 Jesus compares a Pharisee who thinks he is righteous through the law with someone who realizes through the law that he is a sinner in need of a Savior: "Also He spoke this parable to **some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and despised others: 10 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "**God, be merciful to me a sinner!**" *[the law served its true purpose in his life, making him aware of his need for forgiveness]* 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other *[by God's grace he was justified by "the righteousness of God apart from the law... through faith..."]*; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

--again, Scripture repeatedly affirms that before and after the law mankind has always been justified by faith alone...

--Genesis 15:6: "And he [*Abraham*] believed in the LORD, and He accounted it [*his faith*] to him for righteousness."

--Habakkuk 2:4: "But **the just shall live by his faith.**"

--Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, '**The just shall live by faith.**'"

--Galatians 3:11: "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for '**the just shall live by faith.**'"

--Hebrews 10:38: "**Now the just shall live by faith...**"

--Colossians 2:12 describes saving faith as "faith in the working of God..."

--after Paul was saved, he counted all his works under his distorted conception of the law as worthless...
Philippians 3:2-9: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith..."

--along with pointing us to Christ, the moral law also serves as a guide for living after we enter a relationship with God through faith, a standard that our flesh will always oppose but our spirit will delight in – as Paul later states: "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind..." (Romans 7:22-23)

--note: the moral law applies to Christians, but the ceremonial law has been replaced by the reality in Christ...now He is our Sacrifice and our High Priest...

--far from forsaking the law and saying the law is a bad thing, as the legalistic Jews accused him of doing, Paul makes it clear that in it's true purpose "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." (Romans 7:12)