

Christians and the Law

10.13.24

Message 20

Romans Series

Romans 7:7–13 (CSB)

⁷ What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! But, I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, **Do not covet.** ⁸ And sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law sin is dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life again ¹⁰ and I died. The commandment that was meant for life resulted in death for me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing 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 just and good. ¹³ Therefore, did what is good become death to me? Absolutely not! But, sin, in order to be recognized as sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment, sin might become sinful beyond measure.

Introduction

- A. If Romans seems like a hard book, you are in great company.
 - 1. This letter has sparked revivals and reformations.
 - 2. No matter how many times you read it, there is always something to see, learn, or understand.
- B. As we reflect upon these seven verses, I want to take a slightly different approach.
 - 1. First, I want to make 3 observations.
 - 2. Then I want to share 2 illustrations that help me grasp what Paul said in this passage.

3. Then, I'll answer 3 important questions from this text that need to be answered.
4. Finally, we will pray.

Observations

A. #1 The law is holy, just, and good.

1. Too often, we have a negative view of the Old Testament Law.
2. We treat it as something bad or unfair.
3. However, Paul is very clear: the Law was good and served a good purpose.

That Purpose, observation #2, was

B. #2. The Law demonstrates God's holiness.

1. When reading all of the Old Testament Laws, one of our reactions should be: Wow, this God is different.
2. The laws against mixed fabrics, tattoos, eating pork, sexual sin, and even skin diseases were daily reminders that Israel's God was not like the gods of the Promised Land.

a. Remember, the Law was given to a people in context.

1. Former slaves in a polytheistic land.
2. Now they were free people marching toward another polytheistic land.
3. The Law was a powerful standard and reminder that YHWH was not like any other god.

b. Because Israel's God is different, Israel was to be different.

c. This is why the phrase, "Be holy as God is Holy" is repeated so often.

3. The Law is holy, good, and just and demonstrates God's holiness (distinctness and separateness).

4. And that was the calling God had in mind for Israel.

C. **Observation #3: The Law was not a trap or a trick.**

"The commandment that was meant for life resulted in death for me." Vs. 10

1. God did not create the Law to trap his people but to show them the path to life.

a. Paul says the "commandment that was meant for life..."

b. God's intention with the Law was good.

2. But sin seized the opportunity.

a. Because the Law shows right, wrong, and holiness, sin seized the opportunity.

b. The opportunity to disobey now comes into possibility.

3. An example of Paul's argument can be seen in the Garden of Eden.

a. If God had not forbidden Adam from eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, there would be no sin because there would not have been a commandment for him to break.

b. The commandment, "Do not eat of this tree," was a good command that served Adam and Eve's best interest.

1. The command was not arbitrary or a trap.

2. God knew the consequences of breaking that command, and made it clear:

3. Genesis 3:3, "Do not eat or drink of that tree, lest you die."

c. The command to not eat was within their ability.

1. Adam and Eve were not doomed for failure.
2. But because of their sin, all of us are bound to sin and in need of a Savior.
3. Because of their sin, we are doomed for failure and need someone to fulfill the Law we could not keep.
4. Thanks be to Jesus, that He has come and fulfilled perfectly the requirement of the Law and has set us free from the power of sin and death.

Illustration

Illustration #1.

A. Imagine, you fell and you are afraid you have broken a rib and punctured a lung.

1. The ER doctor says, "We are going to send you down to get some scans."
 - a. The people running the X-rays, MRIs, and other advanced scanning are in charge of incredible machines that enable them to take pictures and scans of broken bones and troubled organs and show what is happening inside a person's body.
 - b. What they do is incredibly valuable and helpful.
 - c. But you know what they don't do?
 - d. The X-ray technicians don't set bones, perform surgeries, prescribe medicines, or participate in the patient's day-to-day healing and treatment.
 - e. They perform scans.
 1. They take advanced pictures.
 2. They can provide expertise on what the pictures mean or show.

3. They provide a wonderful, necessary, and good service.
 4. But they can only describe, not heal.
2. The LAW, according to Paul, serves a similar function.
 - a. "I would not have known what coveting was had the law not shown me. And once it showed me what was wrong, sin seized the opportunity."
 - b. The Law showed the standard, and gave us an accurate measurement of how far we do not measure up.
 - c. The picture is good, valid, and important.
 - d. But it doesn't bring salvation.

Illustration #2.

1. It's like telling any kid, and most adult males, don't push the button.
2. That simple command immediately causes an unseen desire for us to wonder, "What does the button do?"
 - a. Why can't I push it?
 - b. What would it hurt?
 - c. Surely I can push it and turn it off before anyone notices, right?
 - d. The command was good—not wrong or sinful—but the prohibition stirred a sinful desire. I cannot control myself; I have to push the button!
3. When I was in Uganda, there were signs on walls of building that would say, "do not urinate on the wall."
 - a. I never once was tempted to urinate on the wall, until someone told me I couldn't.

b. And while we were traveling, that simple prohibition became more and more tempting, especially because there were no bathrooms.

c. Now, the prohibition gave me a boundary that part of me wanted to push.

4. The prohibition against pushing the button, urinating on the wall, or not coveting are good.

a. But they do stir up something that begins to tempt us.

b. And the Law could not help with the temptation.

c. The Law could not empower me or embolden me.

d. It could only show me the boundary, and sin took it from there.

5. To quote the great American theologian, Bugs Bunny, tempted with the possibility of slamming this pie in the face,

“If I dood it I get a whoopin...”

QUESTIONS: Recently on a Wednesday night, I had the groups give me a few questions that need to be answered from this text

#1. What laws are Christians supposed to live by?

A. The extremes we hear from YouTube or that crazy uncle sitting by himself at the family reunion range from beliefs that we must follow All-of-them, and all other extreme is None-of-them.

1. But neither of these answers satisfy the question.

2. So, how do we know what we should follow and what to ignore?

B. A few helpful guidelines:

1. Does Jesus and the NT carry it forward?

- a. Jesus definitely carried forward 10 Commandments in his teachings on the mount.
2. Paul treats coveting as a still applicable law to follow.
2. **Does Jesus and the NT cancel or modify the Law?**
 - a. A good example here is Peter's vision of the food in Acts.
 1. In a vision, Jesus tells Peter to eat from a selection of food that was against the Law but has now been named clean.
 2. This is a large part of why we are permitted to add cheese to our burgers, eat shrimp and lobster, or enjoy bacon.
 - b. Sabbath keeping is also modified by the NT.
 1. The early Gentiles gathered on the first day of the week to celebrate Jesus' resurrection of the dead.
 2. The Sabbath celebrates the Lord's ceasing from work: the Lord's day celebrates Jesus' resurrection and fulfillment of the Law.
 3. When we gather on Sundays, we proclaim Jesus' victory over sin.
 - c. Last example, we also do not offer animal or blood sacrifices because Hebrews clearly teaches that Jesus has fulfilled these in completion.

C. What about the other laws?

1. We know we are not saved by following the Law.
2. Yet, Jesus was clear in Matthew 5: Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees...
3. I can best answer this through our next Question:

#2. How do we know we are living for Christ and not trapped by the Law?

A. To explain this from Scripture, we need to fast forward to Chapter 14.

1. Chapters 12-15 apply the earlier teachings of Romans.
2. He gives the description and doctrine first and then applies it.
3. I can't preach all of Chapter 14 this morning, but I do want to bring it to our attention.
4. This is also why it is so important to read big picture, to have the lay of the land so to speak, because often Scripture will explain itself.

B. Romans 14:1–23 (CSB)

Welcome anyone who is weak in faith, but don't argue about disputed matters. ²One person believes he may eat anything, while one who is weak eats only vegetables. ³One who eats must not look down on one who does not eat, and one who does not eat must not judge one who does, because God has accepted him. ⁴Who are you to judge another's household servant? Before his own Lord he stands or falls. And he will stand, because the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵One person judges one day to be more important than another day. Someone else judges every day to be the same. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶Whoever observes the day, observes it for the honor of the Lord. Whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; and whoever does not eat, it is for the Lord that he does not eat it, and he gives thanks to God. ⁷For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. ⁸If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be Lord over both the dead and the living. ¹⁰But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written,

**As I live, says the Lord,
every knee will bow to me,
and every tongue will give praise to God.'**

¹²So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

THE LAW OF LOVE

¹³Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister.

¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. ¹⁵For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy, by what you eat, someone for whom Christ died. ¹⁶Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, ¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval.

¹⁹So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another. ²⁰Do not tear down God's work because of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make someone fall by what he eats. ²¹It is a good thing not to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. ²²Whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. ²³But whoever doubts stands condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith, and everything that is not from faith is sin.

C. How do I know if living for Christ or I'm living through the Law?

1. The Apostle Paul says the difference is love.
2. Remember, the difference between a tax and a tithe is the heart.

3. We know we are fulfilling the Law and following Christ when we are motivated by love.

- a. The two greatest commandments: Love God, Love others as yourself.
- b. Love is the difference maker.
- c. The Pharisees had obedience without love.
- d. Christ empowers us to be obedient and loving.

D. Paul recognizes that love and obedience can be reflected differently in persons.

1. Some in Rome were still insistent in the old ways, and Paul said that was ok.
2. Some still wanted to celebrate special days, and not eat meat that might have been sacrificed to idols, and that was ok.
3. Paul stressed the importance of diversity and love.
4. Where there is no love, Law rules.
5. And where the Law rules, sin and death are soon to follow.

#3. How do we recognize if we are grace-heavy or law-heavy?

1. A simple answer is:
 - a. If nothing is ever right or good, I'm law-heavy.
 - b. If nothing is ever wrong, I'm grace-heavy.
2. My attitude toward sin and grieving God is an indicator.
 - a. For example, if I know something is wrong and do it anyway because God will forgive me, I'm probably grace-heavy.
 - b. If I do something wrong and I feel as if God can't or won't forgive me or that God cannot love me anymore, then perhaps I'm law-heavy.

c. If you are calculating how much you can get away with before it is sin, you are not under the influence of righteousness but lawlessness.

3. **The heart of a child of God is captivated by loving, honoring, and serving the Lord to the best of their ability.**

a. Not to earn their father's love but as an expression of the love that has been shown.

b. I honor and love my dad not to earn his love but because he already loves me.

c. As Julie and I sat with her parents at Mercy Hospital this week, we served them, honored them, and loved them not to earn their love but because of our love for them.

d. Our actions were not works to earn love but expressions of a love already received.

4. That, my friend, is what Grace looks like.

a. Law asks, how far can I go before it is sin?

b. Grace asks how close love will allow me to be.

c. Law challenges the limits of sin.

d. Grace explores the depths of love.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live and walk in love and grace.