

(7:7) - From here to the end of this chapter Paul deals with the main purpose of God's law in the lives of God's elect. From **7:7-13**, he deals with the purpose of the law before his conversion and as used by the Holy Spirit to convict him of sin, depravity, and the impossibility of salvation based on his works. From **7:14-25**, he deals with the purpose of the law in his present life as a believer, a sinner saved by grace, and how the Spirit uses the law to always convict him of sin and, by God's grace, continually drive Him to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid" - The fact that the law cannot justify sinners based on their works, or that, by the grace of God in Christ, believers are dead to the law and not under the law, shows no fault, weakness, or shortcoming in the law itself. It does not mean that the law was totally useless in the lives of God's people. **"God forbid"** that we should think this!

"Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" - The law was (and is) God's revealed standard of sin and righteousness whereby we can measure ourselves to see where we stand according to God's requirement. Paul states that he would not have known the reality of **"sin"** (falling short of the perfection of righteousness revealed in God's law) had God not revealed this standard in the law. He uses the example of sins of the heart, such as **"lust"** (unlawful desires) revealed in the commandment, **"Thou shalt not covet"** (the sinful and selfish desire for things). This showed Paul that sin was more than the outward act of disobedience. Sin also reaches to the thoughts, desires, motives, and goals.

(7:8) - **"But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence"** - Paul begins to show here that the problem with his relationship to the law and his falling short of the law's requirements was not caused by the law or due to any fault of the law. It was his own sinfulness that caused him to misuse the law. The word **"occasion"** means "a place from which a movement or attack is made, a base of operations; that which gives occasion and supplies material for an undertaking, the incentive for such an undertaking; the resources we avail ourselves of in attempting or performing any particular goal." The point is this - As an unregenerate unbeliever, when Paul read and studied God's law, because of unbelief, self-righteousness, and religious pride, he chose to use it as his base of operation to establish his own righteousness before God (*cf. Rom. 9:31-10:3*). The result was that it worked in him, not righteousness or godliness, but **"all manner of concupiscence"** (unlawful, ungodly, evil desires). Before his conversion to faith in Christ, Paul desired salvation and a right relationship with God based on his works of the law, and this was (and is) evil in the sight of God.

"For without the law sin was dead" - Paul was never **"without the law"** in the sense that he had always heard and read this law from his childhood. He was a Jew who was taught from his youth about God's law and tried to keep that law (*Php. 3:4-6*). **"Without the law"** is Paul's way of describing the time before his conversion when, even though he read, studied, and tried to keep the law, he was ignorant of the perfection of the law that can only be found in and fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 10:4*). At that time he judged that **"sin was dead"** as to his own personal state. He thought that he had kept the law enough so that he would not be judged as a sinner.

(7:9) - **"For I was alive without the law once"** - Even as an unbeliever, Paul knew that sin deserved death. But judging himself NOT to be a sinner, because of his ignorance of the perfection of righteousness found only in Christ, Paul judged himself to be alive and not

deserving of death. He knew sin deserves death and righteousness deserves life. Thinking himself to be righteous, he believe himself to be alive. But his judgment was out of ignorance of the law and because of his own self-righteousness and religious pride. ***“But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died”*** - When God the Holy Spirit revealed the perfection of righteousness required by God in the ***“commandment,”*** Paul then knew that what he thought before was dead in him, ***“sin,”*** was very much alive. He then saw the reality of his own sinfulness and depravity, and he ***“died,”*** i.e. saw that by nature he was spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and he deserved eternal damnation and death based on his best efforts to keep the law. This is when God the Holy Spirit convicts God’s people of sin, righteousness, and judgment (***John 16:8-11***).

(7:10-11) - This is what it means for a sinner to be “slain by the law.” ***“And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death”*** - Through the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit, the ***“commandment”*** that Paul thought was ***“ordained”*** by God to be a way of ***“life”*** (salvation) for him based on his deeds of the law, he ***“found to be”*** the way of ***“death”*** (***Rom. 3:19-20***). And Paul emphasizes here that the problem at that time was not the law but his own sinfulness - ***“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”*** The law did not deceive Paul into thinking he could be saved and have life by his works. It was his own sinful self-righteousness and religious pride that deceived him, and, by the law, ***“slew”*** him. This means that it exposed him to be spiritually dead, and it judged him to be worthy of eternal death.

(7:12) - ***“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good”*** - Paul was adamant to show that there was (and is) no imperfection or problem with God’s law in this matter. Whether God by His law saves sinners or damns sinners, God is ALWAYS fair and just. His law is always ***“holy, just, and good.”***

(7:13) - ***“Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid”*** - God the Holy Spirit certainly used the goodness of God’s law to expose Paul’s natural spiritual death in trespasses and sins, along with the fact that he deserved eternal death and damnation based on his best efforts to keep the law. But was that the only purpose of this revelation of the righteousness of the law? ***“God forbid”!*** Paul now begins to make a transition from the conviction of sin by the law to the ultimate reason for this conviction as will be expressed beginning in ***Romans 7:25*** and continuing through ***Romans 8***. He states - ***“But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”*** First, Paul admits that it was not the law itself that worked death in him, but sin within him - ***“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law”*** (***1 Cor. 15:56***). The law only condemns sinners where sin is charged to them. Where sin is not imputed, but righteousness IS imputed, the law cannot condemn the sinner (***Rom. 4:6-8***). The non-imputation of sins and the imputation of righteousness can only be accomplished by the grace of God in Christ (***2 Cor. 5:21***). The Holy Spirit used the law as fulfilled by Christ to reveal to Paul the exceeding sinfulness of sin (***John 16:8-11; Rom. 10:4; Php. 3:7-9***). Before this, Paul was deceived by sin because what he thought was good did not ***“appear”*** to him to be sinful. Sinners must be brought to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin in that the best and most sincere efforts of sinners to keep the law are sinful, even iniquity and evil, when aimed at the ground of saving themselves, making themselves righteous enough to be justified and accepted with God, and/or maintaining their salvation. Such efforts are sinful because they do not glorify or honor God. They deny the glorious Person and finished work of Christ, and they give sinners room to boast in themselves. They are the fruits of unbelief and, therefore, fruit unto death.