

# Romans Session 90

## Sin and the Law 3

### The Believer and Indwelling Sin 1

*Romans 7:12-13 (NASB)*

<sup>12</sup> *So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

<sup>13</sup> *Therefore did that which is good become a cause of 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 would become utterly sinful.*

The Apostle once again answers the question that is being asked about the Law, is it sin? The answer is no not only is it not sin, but it is **holy, and the commandment is righteous and good.**

Throughout the remainder of the chapter Paul continues to praise and exalt God's law, calling it spiritual (v 14), good (v 16), and joyfully concurring in his "inner man" with its divine truth and standards (v 22).

David highly exalted God's Law, proclaiming:

*Psalms 19:7-11 (NASB)*

<sup>7</sup> *The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*

<sup>8</sup> *The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

<sup>9</sup> *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.*

<sup>10</sup> *They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.*

<sup>11</sup> *Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.*

The fact that the Law reveals, arouses, and condemns sin and brings death to the sinner does not make the law itself evil.

When a person is justly convicted and sentenced for murder, there is no fault in the law or with those responsible for upholding it.

The fault is in the one who broke the law.

Paul again anticipates the next question, which is, **"therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me?"** And Paul again answers his own question with a resounding, **may it never be!**

To use again the analogy of the murder trial, it is not the law against murder, but the committing of murder that merits punishment.

The law itself is good; it is the breaking of it that is evil. How much more is God's law **good**, and how much more evil is the breaking of it?

It is not the Law that is the cause of spiritual death but **rather it is sin.**

The Law reveals and arouses sin **in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting death through that which is good.**

Sin's deadly character is exposed under the pure light of God's law.

God has given His holy, righteous, and good law in order **that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.**

As already noted, the preaching of the law is necessary to the preaching of the gospel. Until men see their sin for what it is, they will not see their need of salvation from it.

Paul's point here is that sin is so **utterly sinful** that it can even pervert and undermine the purpose of God's holy law. It can twist and distort the law so that instead of bringing life, as God intended, it brings death. It can manipulate the pure law of God to deceive and damn people. Such is the wretchedness of sin.

In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul gives additional insight on the place and purpose of the law.

***Galatians 3:19-22 (NASB)***

***<sup>19</sup> Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.***

***<sup>20</sup> Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.***

***<sup>21</sup> Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.***

***<sup>22</sup> But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.***

The ultimate purpose of the law was to drive men to faith in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the demands of the law on behalf of sinners who trust in His righteousness instead of their own.

Although Robert Murray McCheyne died in 1843 at the age of thirty, he left God's people a great treasure in his memoirs and other writings.

In the poem "Jehovah Tsidkenu," which means, "The Lord Our Righteousness," he testifies:

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,  
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;  
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,  
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;  
But even when they pictured the blood sprinkled tree,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,  
I wept when the waters went over His soul,  
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree  
Jehovah Tsidkenu, twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me by light from on high,  
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;

No refuge, no safety in self could I see—  
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Savior must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;  
My guilty fear banished, with bolness I came  
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free—  
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.

Jehovah Tsidkenu! My treasure and boast,  
Jehovah Tsidkenyu! I ne'er can be lost;  
In Thee shall I conquer by flood and by field—  
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!

Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,  
This "watchword" shall rally my faltering breath;  
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be.

McCheyene experienced the same conviction of sin as did the apostle Paul.

When he saw himself in the full light of God's law, he realized he was ruined and dead and had no hope but in the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After salvation Christians still need continual exposure to the divine standards of God's law in order to see more clearly the sin in their lives and to confess it and experience the full blessings that belongs to His children.

Then they can say with the Psalmist;

***Psalm 119:11 (NASB)***

***<sup>11</sup> Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.***

And they can claim the promise;

***1 John 1:9 (NASB)***

***<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

### The Believer and Indwelling Sin 1

***Romans 7:14-25 (NASB)***

***<sup>14</sup> For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.***

***<sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.***

***<sup>16</sup> But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.***

***<sup>17</sup> So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.***

***<sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.***

***<sup>19</sup> For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.***

- <sup>20</sup> *But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*  
<sup>21</sup> *I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.*  
<sup>22</sup> *For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,*  
<sup>23</sup> *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.*  
<sup>24</sup> *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*  
<sup>25</sup> *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.*

As we begin this part of Paul's discourse, we must realize there is much to learn here about the Christian's inner conflict with himself, one part of him pulling one directions and another part pulling the opposite. The conflict is real and it is intense.

For perhaps as long as the church has known this text, however, interpreters have disagreed as to whether the person described is a Christian or a non-Christian. Whole movements have arisen to promote one of those views or the other. One side maintains that the person is too much in bondage to sin to be a believer, whereas the other side maintains that the person has too much love for the things of God and too much hatred of sin to be an unbeliever.

So, it becomes very obvious that we need to determine which sort of person Paul is talking about before any interpretation of the passage is attempted.

It is also important to determine whether Paul's first-person singular refers to himself or whether that is simply a literary device he uses to identify more personally with his readers.

The answer to these two questions will automatically answer a third: If Paul is speaking of himself, is he speaking of his condition before or after his conversion?

Those who believe Paul is speaking about an unbeliever point out that he describes the person as being, "***of flesh, sold into bondage***" (v 14), as "***having nothing good dwelling in him***" (v 18), and as, "***a wretched man trapped in the body of death***" (v 24)

How then it is argued, could such a person correspond to the Christian Paul describes in chapter 6, as "***having died to sin***" (v 2), as "***having his old self crucified and no longer being enslaved to sin***" (v 6), as being, "***being freed from sin***" (vv 7, 18, 22), as "***considering himself dead to sin***" (v 11), and as, "***being obedient from the heart to God's Word***" (v 17)?

Those who contend Paul is speaking, about a believer in Chapter 7 point out that this person desires to obey God's law and hates doing what is evil (vv 15, 19, 21). That he is humble before God, realizing that nothing good dwells in his humanness (v 18), and that he sees sin as in him, but it's not all there is in him (vv 17, 20-22).

He gives thanks to Jesus Christ as his Lord and serves Him with his mind (v 25).

The Apostle has already established that none of those things characterize the unsaved.

The unbeliever not only hates God's truth and righteousness but suppresses them, he willfully rejects the natural evidence of God, he neither honors nor gives thanks to God, and he is totally dominated by sin so that he arrogantly disobeys God's law and encourages other to do so;

**Romans 1:18-21 (NASB)**

***<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,***

***<sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.***

***<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.***

***<sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.***

Now we must stop here but we will carry this much further next time we are together.

Let us Pray!