

Romans 6... 7... 8

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

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."

Romans 7:8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.

Romans 7:9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Romans 7:10 And the commandment, which *was to bring* life, I found to *bring* death.

Romans 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.

Romans 7:12 Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

On Halloween you can take the candy and other goodies your kids received from strangers to the hospital. There the staff will x-ray the items to show you what might be lurking inside – things like razor blades in candied apples.

(In fact, there never has been a documented case of a child being poisoned by a stranger with Halloween treats. As for needles or razor blades in apples or candy, actual cases exist but are extremely rare, according to experts. The National Confectioners' Association has operated a toll-free hotline for more than 10 years. This line allows police to report incidents of alleged tainted candy. The group has no confirmed case of a child being seriously injured by tainted candy from a stranger).

(The biggest threat to children's well-being during the prime trick-or-treating hours of 4 pm to 10 pm comes from something kids encounter every day — cars. On average, four children are struck and killed by cars every Halloween in the United States).

Enough of that... We were talking about x-rays. In this section of Romans Paul discussed the intent and effect of God's Law. We'll see that God's Law is like a spiritual x-ray machine. When we are exposed to it, it reveals what is already inside of us.

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 had been talking about how God's Law, and law in general, aroused people to sinful behavior. Someone might conclude that there was something wrong or even sinful about God's Law.

Certainly not! The problem isn't with the Law; it's within me. The point Paul labored to make in these verses is that God's Law exposes just how sinful I am.

I would not have known sin except through the law. In Paul's century the Jews had summed-up God's Law with 613 commandments. Of the 613 commandments, 248 were mandates telling you what you should do and 365 were prohibitions telling you what not to do. Then there were endless commentaries on exactly how to 'keep' the various mandates and how to avoid the prohibitions. The Jews thought that by observing the Law they were attaining and maintaining a righteousness that was acceptable to God.

Paul thought he was keeping the Law – **until he became a Christian!** Afterward he understood that the Law wasn't something to make you righteous but to expose your unrighteousness:

For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."

Covetousness is the most internal of the prohibitions in the Ten Commandments. Paul's point was that God's Law exposes what is already present in your heart. It exposes a sin nature you are born with. Thus no amount of trying not to covet can make you righteous.

Romans 7:8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.

Opportunity is a word borrowed from the military. It means to *establish a base of operations*. When I hear **the commandment**, such as Do not covet, I realize that within my heart sin has a base of operations. I *do* covet! There is a base right there, in my heart, from

which covetousness operates. In fact, not just covetousness but **all manner of evil desire** is at work in my heart.

Apart from the law sin was dead means I did not recognize my indwelling sin nature until it was exposed by God's Law. Think back to our x-ray analogy. Until I get the results of my x-ray I don't really know what is inside me.

Romans 7:9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

I was alive once without the law means that Paul thought he was pursuing eternal life as a self-righteous Pharisee by keeping God's Law outwardly. ***Then he got saved!***

Then the commandment came means he finally understood the Law. It showed him his sin; it **revived**, or brought to life, the reality of his indwelling sin. Paul **died** means he understood he was dead in his trespasses and sins.

He called it **the commandment**. He could be referring to what he just mentioned, the **commandment** about **covetousness**. It may be that, on the road to Damascus, the thing that Jesus especially showed Paul was his **covetousness**.

When using God's Law to show someone their sin it's a good idea to be specific. We should talk about things like lying, adultery, and coveting rather than just saying "the Law" in a general sense.

Romans 7:10 And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.

As a Pharisee Paul thought he could have eternal **life** by keeping God's Law. But when it really exposed his heart he saw it's true purpose. It showed him he was dead. The Law shows us our need for a Savior.

Romans 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.

While expecting to merit eternal life by keeping the Law, God showed Paul his **sin** by revealing his covetous heart. He realized he had been **deceived** by sin in that he thought it could be overcome by outward obedience alone. Instead he would be **killed** for his sin. He was headed for eternal death.

Romans 7:12 Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

God's **law** in general, and its **commandments** in particular, are **holy** and **just** and **good**. They serve a great purpose. They show you God's perfect standard of righteousness.

A few years ago there was a saying, "There is a God, and you're not Him!" It's important that a person see God is perfect and that He therefore can only be approached by those who are perfect.

His Law shows us we are far from perfect. It shows us we can never perfect ourselves. It shows us our hopeless condition. It shows us our need for a Savior.

God's Law is His spiritual x-ray. Christians are His technicians who subject nonbelievers to the x-ray of the Law in the hope they will see what is really inside them – a sin nature that has set up a base of operations.

- being changed to bring change -

Reduced to hopelessness by exposure to God's Law a person is ready to receive Jesus Christ as God's only way of salvation.