**Lesson 17: The Law is Not the Problem**

Text: Romans 7:7-14

**Introduction**

In Romans 6:1-6, Paul taught that you must be free from the law because it could only bring forth sin and death. This was a revolutionary thought to many who were once bound to the law. Paul used marriage as an illustration to teach that since the believer has died and has new life in Christ, he or she is free to be united with Christ. Just as a believer has died with reference to sin (6:2), they have also died with reference to the law (7:4). Paul anticipates that this truth would disturb those committed to the law. They might accuse Paul of turning the law into something sinful. If the law can only produce sin and death, isn’t it the problem? In this lesson, we will follow Paul’s defense of the law to see that the law is NOT the problem. We will see that the law is beneficial because it serves its God-given purposes.

1. **The law is beneficial because it reveals our sin. (v. 7-9)**
   1. Using his typical question/answer approach, Paul denied that the gospel made the law sinful. (v. 7)
   2. Instead, he was made aware of his sinful condition by the law. Douglas Moo commented that the law “unmasks sin in its true colors”.
   3. Paul used the sin of covetousness as an example. The commandment against covetousness is given in Exodus 20:17. It forbids the inward sin of desiring that which belongs to another. It applies to material possessions, the position or status of another and a person who is not ours to have.
      1. William Barclay said, “It is the spirit which always wants more, and wants it in the ugliest way”.
      2. It is consistently listed with other sins that we would consider to be repulsive. (1 Cor. 5:11, 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3)
   4. Sin uses the law as its base of operations. (v. 8)
      1. The word *occasion* is defined as a “starting point or base of operations for an expedition; hence occasion, opportunity, favorable circumstance” (Friberg).
      2. The old nature is rebellious against the commandments of the holy God. When we are told not to do something, there is within us a strong desire to do that very thing! We view the command not to do something as our opportunity to do it. As we noted in verse 5, we have a natural appetite for the forbidden!
   5. Although contrary to its intent, the law incites the sin nature.
      1. Instead of curbing covetousness, Paul said the law *wrought* (produced) in him an array of *concupiscence* (evil desires).
      2. “Since we have a sinful nature, the law is bound to arouse that nature the way a magnet draws steel” (Wiersbe).
      3. “That law which Jews considered a great bulwark against sin is actually, according to Paul, an instrument that sin has used to produce more sin and to make the sin problem even worse than it was without the law” (Douglas Moo).
   6. Notice the array of evil passions that originate in the heart according to Jesus: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” (Mark 7:21-23)
      1. The law did not produce these evil desires. They were already part of man’s sin nature.
      2. The law reveals these desires as sinful and thus condemns the sinner. (v. 9)
2. **The law is beneficial because it was intended to protect life. (v. 10-11)** 
   1. Loving parents give their children boundaries for their own good. They do not prohibit playing near a road because they are controlling. They place restrictions to protect their children.
   2. The law was given to Israel to protect the children of Israel. It was their worship of the true God. As they entered the Promised Land, they would be exposed to the idolatry of the Canaanites. They would be tempted to join in their practices. The law was given to produce reverence for God.
   3. The law was also appointed to produce respect for others. It would give life to their relationships.
      1. It would protect the life of their parent/child relationship.
      2. It would literally protect life as they refrained from murder.
      3. It would protect the life of their marriage as they avoided the destructive sin of adultery.
      4. It would protect their integrity as they abstain from lying.
   4. Paul said that the commandment that was given for this purpose turned out to be his death sentence. (v. 11)
3. **The law is beneficial because it is holy. (v. 12)**
   1. It cannot be sinful since it came from the holy God.
   2. The holiness of the law reveals the holiness of the God who gave it. When parents instruct their children to be kind to each other it reveals something about both parents and children. First, it demonstrates the nature of children. They are prone to be mean to each other. They naturally engage in arguments and resort to lashing out verbally and even physically. It also demonstrates the character of the parents. Their command reveals their maturity and desire for harmony in the home.
   3. This illustration breaks down due to the sinful nature of parents, but this is not the case with God. God issued holy commandments because He is by His very nature holy. He cannot be otherwise.
   4. The law is holy (separate from sin), just (righteous) and good (morally upright and beneficial).
4. **The law is beneficial because it is spiritual. (v. 13-14)** 
   1. The law is not unholy because it reveals our lack of holiness. Rather, it reveals how utterly sinful we really are! (v. 13)
   2. It is given by the Spirit. It is, therefore, spiritual in its nature. (v. 14)
   3. As a result, it reveals just how *carnal* (fleshly) we are as natural slaves to sin.
5. **Central Idea: Paul demonstrated that the law is beneficial because it serves its God-given purposes.**
6. **Application: The law is beneficial to our lives today because it continues to serve its God-given purposes.** 
   1. Read Psalm 19:7-11 to see the beauty of the law.
   2. We should read it regularly. (Joshua 1:8)
   3. We should take heed to it. (Psalm 119:9)
   4. We should use it to lead others to Christ. (Gal. 3:24)

**Conclusion**

Imagine you sit on a freshly painted bench that is clearly marked by a sign that reads, “Caution: Wet Paint!” Is it the sign’s fault that you sat on the bench? It would be ridiculous to get upset at the sign or to blame the sign. You saw the sign and disregarded it. The sign is not the problem, you are. The law is NOT the problem. We will see in the next lesson that YOU are the problem.