

# The Law & Sin

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome to this week's message from Faith Bible Church of Lake Charles. We're excited to share a practical Bible-based teaching that we hope will encourage you and strengthen your faith.

! Thanks for listening. Now, here's today's message. I have a question for you. Have you ever blamed the law or the rule for the problem?

You know, the speed limit sign doesn't make you speed. It just tells you that you are. The bathroom scale doesn't make you put on weight. It just shows when you are.

And the doctor who tells you that your blood pressure is high isn't dangerous. He's not the problem or she's not the problem. They're just one brave enough to tell you about the problem, to tell you the truth.

Now, sometimes people do this with God's law also. You know, people have been saying things about the law. Well, you know, if the law hadn't said, don't covet, I wouldn't wish or want for things that I don't have.

[ 1 : 11 ] You know, if there were any rules, then I wouldn't break any rules. People have said that about the law. Well, if they wouldn't have made that law, then I wouldn't have had to worry because I wouldn't be breaking the law.

Well, that sounds kind of logical. But Paul says, not so fast. The rule is not the problem. In the last few weeks, we've watched the Apostle Paul work through law and grace.

The difference in the parallels and the contrast between law and grace. What one does and or what one prescribes and what one the other takes care of.

And every time a problem or every time someone comes up with something, Paul counters it and he anticipates what someone may be seeing.

And then he counters that problem. And what he's telling us is there is a law, but the law is not the problem.

[ 2 : 17 ] Sin in our lives is the problem. So in our text today, Paul faces the next objection head on. Is the law sin? And why would Paul say that?

Because back a few verses ago, Paul said that the law stirs up sin. Remember when we talked about the sign about wet paint, do not touch.

Before the sign was there, you weren't considering, hey, let me go down the hallway and touch the walls. You weren't thinking about it. But when the sign went up, there was something inside of you that said, hmm, I wonder.

Is it still wet? And everything within us just wants to touch the wall. Why? Why? Because the rule was put there and the rule stirred up the longing or the desire in our heart.

And that, he says, what the law does. The law then stirs up that within our life. And what Paul is going to show us today, not to steal my own thunder, but what Paul is going to say is to the answer to the law, is the law sin?

[ 3 : 28 ] He uses one of the strongest negatives that he could use in the Greek language. God forbid. May it never come to be. Certainly not.

He teaches that what he's teaching here today will, I hope, change what we think about God, think about the law, and think about our own problem with sin.

That's the main thing that I would like for us to walk out with here today. And that is, God's law isn't the problem. Sin is the problem.

The law just turns the lights on and lets us know what the problem is. And Paul gives us three things that the law does.

And if we understand all three, we're going to stop blaming the mirror and allow the law to point us toward the only one who can give us life.

[ 4 : 26 ] So let's read our section this morning. We find it in the book of Romans, chapter number 7, verses 7 through 9. Verse 7 says, What shall we say then?

So that Paul is anticipating the objection. Is the law sin? God forbid, or 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. But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.

For apart from the law, sin was dead. I was alive once without the law. But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. That's a little bit confusing.

But we're going to unpack that this morning and uncover what it means when Paul said that he was alive before the law. But when the law came that he died.

[ 5 : 25 ] So the first thing that we see is the law names what we already are. The law names the problem that already exists within our lives.

Romans 7, verse 7. As we go back to verse 7, he says, What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Because the law produced or because the law, as Paul said, aroused those desires in our life. Then is the law sin because it arouses sin's desires. And Paul's objection to that is, no, of course not. May it never be. God forbid.

The law is not bad. The law is not the problem. He's been saying, verse 5, the law arouses sinful passions. And he says that we've already died to the law.

We see that in verse 4. We also see that in verse number 6 of Romans chapter 7. So the natural question is, then, is there something wrong with sin?

[ 6 : 31 ] Did God make a mistake when he instituted the law? Or is the law itself the problem? So Paul's answer is, of course not.

May it never be. As a matter of fact, Paul used that negative 14 times in the book of Romans. Every time something came up that potentially would have allowed a theological problem or something that was wrong to continue, Paul counters it with, God forbid.

That is wrong. Don't even think about it. So what does the law actually do? We see that in the second part of verse number 7. He says, That sounds a bit interesting, but we'll continue to unpack it in just a moment.

What Paul is doing here is, Paul now moves to I. Paul has been throughout the entire first section of the book of Romans.

He used the third person. He used the second person. And he used the first person plural. Now, he begins to use the first person singular.

[ 8 : 02 ] There are some theologians that wonder, what is Paul doing here? Is he referring to maybe Adam or referring to Israel? But what most Bible scholars believe is, Paul is now turning the light onto himself.

Paul is talking about his condition before he came to Christ. So Paul is using himself as his own example of what the law does and what the purpose of the law is.

What Paul is saying here in verse number 7, Unless the law had come, I would not have known sin. Now, the word for new that he used here is not just a concept that we intellectually know.

There are some things that we know, but we don't know it experientially. We haven't experienced it before. So the word that Paul used is a word that means he knows by experience.

What Paul is not saying is, he didn't say that I was unaware of sin. Paul knew about sin, but what he's saying is the law made him personally accountable to it.

[ 9 : 09 ] He knew, he didn't understand and really understand covetousness until the law came out and said, Thou shalt not covet.

And I want you to notice the example Paul used, and he refers to the Ten Commandments. Covetousness is the only sin within the Ten Commandments that is entirely internal.

I mean, you can covet and nobody around you will know it. I mean, you can be sitting here this morning and coveting something, and nobody around you would ever know it. And I believe that's why Paul brought that out.

Because what he's pointing to is, the law has the power to get right inside to the very heart of the problem and show you things that nothing else will. He says the law points to covetousness as sin.

And it's inward. It's the sin that most people will never admit to, and that other people won't see on the outside.

[10:11] So the law named sin, Paul didn't even know he was committing it. And that's the law's first gift. What it does is, it shines a light on us.

It lets us know what's wrong with us. It lets us know how we should be corrected. And so what did sin do with that? What did sin do with the law?

We see in verse 8 through verse 9, But sin, Paul already said the law is not bad. What the law does is the law shines a light on us and shows us where we've gone wrong, where we've missed the mark.

But in verse 8, Paul says, But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment. So what did sin do? Sin took the law and used it as a beachhead, produced in me all manner of evil desire, for apart from the law, sin was dead.

So what sin did was sin took an opportunity. The word Paul used was originally a military term. An opportunity, the term there, meant a base of operations or a beachhead from which military action would take place.

[11:24] So the army would move forward and they would put together a forward operating position. And from that forward operating position, then they would then go out and fight the enemy.

What Paul says is, sin created a beachhead and it used the law to do it. And it would use the law to arouse sinful passions and sinful desires within us.

So the law, the moment the law named something as forbidden, what sin did, sin produced within Paul every kind of desire, evil desire that it could.

Paul says these desires are deep cravings, they're deep longings. It describes the disordered self-serving desires that are part of the human condition.

So we desire things. Many of them are good. But can something good become something bad? Of course.

[12:33] Just about everything God has created that's good, sin can twist and turn it into something bad. What Paul is saying is, sin used the law as a forward operating base or as a beachhead to take what the law said is wrong.

And then just like that wet paint sign, it produces all kinds of desires within us that will say, well, I don't know, maybe I'll try it and see.

So Paul sums it all up in verse number nine. He says, I was once alive without the law, but when the commandment came, he says, sin revived and I died or sprang to life.

The parallel that we see, I believe parallels what happened in the Garden of Eden pretty closely. Because of the command, or before the command, Adam and Eve were in the garden.

They could do anything they wanted in the garden. But what happened when God gave the soul condition, don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because in the day that, because the moment you eat it, that's when you will die.

[13:52] And what sin did was, through the serpent, sin came in and said, no, you won't. What God's command did was, it provided a beachhead for sin, so that sin could come in and say, you see, God said no, but it's really not that bad.

We'll find out in a moment that sin, and we probably already know it, sin's a deceiver. Sin will lie to you. Sin will say, hey, this would be so good. This will be so great. Matter of fact, this is awesome. Everybody's doing it. You're missing out.

And sin loves to agitate within us what's been called FOMO, fear of missing out. You know, everybody else is doing it. You better try it, because you're missing something really great.

That's what sin does for us. So that's exactly what parallels, or that exactly parallels what happened in Genesis. Paul's point is, the law didn't create the sin. The sin was already there.

The law just turned the lights on to the problem. Think about it this way. Before Louisiana made it a law that it was illegal to text and have the phone up to your ear, people were already doing it.

[15:14] And I think most every single one of us knew that it was a really dumb idea. Because the moment you try texting on your phone while you're driving, and you have seen people do that, and they're weaving, they're going all over the road, they're stopped at a stop sign. I love this one.

They're stopped at a traffic light, and you see they're on their phone. The light turns green. What do they do? They're still engrossed in their phone. So it's really not a great idea to use your phone while you're driving.

But what happened when the law came out, and we read it on the news, we heard it on TV, there's a new Louisiana driving, texting and driving law, and you can't have the phone to your ear.

What happened was, we now know what we're doing, and we know that it's wrong to do it. Now some of us still do it.

But what the law did was the law showed that it's a problem. And sometimes, I believe, sometimes people will just do it because they want to flaunt the law.

[16:25] And say, you know what, you can't tell me what to do, and I'll still do it. Aren't there people that do that with God's law? Well, you know what, God's just a big killjoy. He just doesn't want me to have fun, and I'll do it anyway.

So what Paul says is, what the law does is, the law states what's already true. The law just mirrors God's holiness. It just mirrors God's character.

And Paul's saying, before the law, it doesn't mean I was unaware of sin. It doesn't mean I wasn't sinning. But what the law did was, the law held me to a standard.

And because of that, I died. I realized that I was a sinner, and I sinned toward God. And so what the law does is, the point of the law is to push us toward Jesus Christ, to help us to understand that we are not good enough.

So what do we do? First of all, I think our first application is, be honest with what the law tells you.

And what the law shows you, don't shoot the messenger. Don't blame the law for the sin in your life, just because it pointed it out.

[17:34] And by the same token, we don't blame that police officer or that sheriff's deputy who stops us and gives us a ticket because we are talking on our phone, with our phone to our ear while we're driving.

They're just the messenger. They're the one that's simply upholding the law. The law's there. So don't blame the law when the law points out sin in our life. And as Paul said, it produced death within us.

And that discomfort that we feel when the law convicts us of something, you know what? That's God's mercy. That's God's mercy pointing us back to Him and showing us that we do, in fact, have a problem.

The law is simply doing its job when it makes us uncomfortable. That's the first step toward grace.

The second thing the law does, we're going to see in verses 10 and 11, is the law shows us our true enemy.

The law shows us what is really the problem. It shows the enemy's true nature. Let's read verse 10. And the commandment, and we'll see an irony here, and the commandment which was to bring life, Paul says, I found to bring death.

[18:46] Verse 11, for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. What we see in verse 10 is a very, very cruel irony.

The law, when God gave the law, was not to hurt people. It was not God being this cosmic killjoy that said, you know what?

I'm keeping you from having fun. I'm giving you all these rules that now you just can't do. They were wrong to start with. Paul is saying the law was simply given to show us our path to God, that we need God.

The commandment was designed to bring life. We see that in Deuteronomy 5, 33. The commandment was designed to bring life, but Paul says the commandment that was designed to bring life, I found to bring death.

It's not a contradiction. What it is, is the tragedy of what sin does. Sin takes something good, if you will.

[19:53] Paul takes our nature and he weaponizes it. You see, we could take a hammer, for instance. A hammer in the hand of an artisan can use it to build a beautiful edifice.

But you put a hammer in the hand of an evil person, it can kill somebody. And that's what sin does. Sin uses the law to say, you know what?

Why don't you try this? God said no, but God's withholding something from you. The commandment was not the problem. Paul says our sinful nature is the problem.

And so what's the method sin uses? Look at verse 11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me. And by it killed me. Paul uses that military language again. Sin takes that opportunity.

Sin uses the law as a beachhead, as a forward base of operation. But this time he uses a crucial word. He said, sin deceived me. Sin deceived me.

[ 20 : 58 ] What does sin do? Sin says, it's not so bad. Sin says, if you try this, it's going to feel good. If you do this, it's going to bring to you a, it's going to fulfill a purpose in your life.

It's going to fulfill you. It's going to bring you joy. It's going to bring you happiness. But that's the deceitfulness of sin. Sin doesn't tell you the end result of what sin produces in us.

It doesn't show us the consequences. You know, it was like the, it was like the cigarette commercials back in the 1950s and 60s. The Marlboro, cowboy, you're going to be manly.

You know, if you, if you smoke this. And the cigarette companies even got physicians to say that cigarette smoking wasn't bad for you.

They even used doctors to tout cigarettes. Isn't that something? But what it didn't show you is what, in the recent history, where they'll put a, they'll show on a commercial, a set of lungs that have been literally destroyed by cigarette smoke.

[ 22 : 20 ] You see, the tobacco companies didn't show you the end result of a lifetime of smoking. Sin does the same thing. Sin says, try this.

You know, you'll make, it'll make you part of the in crowd. You know, people will respect you for it, but it doesn't show you the end results of doing it. So Paul says, that's what, that's what sin does. Sin will lie and sin will deceive you.

And what Paul is doing is, again, he's drawing a direct line back to Genesis 3. Sin did this in the Garden of Eden. And what was the result? Death.

Not necessarily physical death, although Adam and Eve began to die physically at that moment. But they were spiritually separated from God. God said, don't eat of the tree.

Sin said, eating it will make you like God. And so they chose to do it. In Paul's life, the law said, don't covet. And Paul said, it aroused that, it aroused that, that evil desire within me.

[ 23 : 19 ] Sin always lies and promises something good. But in the end, what it'll do is it'll do a bait and switch. It'll give you something bad as a result. So what does this tell us about sin?

Verses 10, 11 exposes what sin really is. I've heard preachers, very, very famous preachers. And one in particular, I think of, I won't say who he is, but he's from the Houston area.

You know exactly what I'm talking about. Was on a talk show, was on a show one time and he was asked about sin. He hemmed and hawed around almost to the point where he said sin was just a mistake.

You know what? Sin's not a mistake. Sin's not just tripping. Sin is evil. Sin is what sent Jesus Christ to the cross of Calvary to die on the cross in our place.

You see the cross behind me today, Palm Sunday. That day, that time when Jesus Christ rode into town on a donkey, on a colt, and people threw palm branches.

[ 24 : 27 ] Well, that just shows us how people will change. He rode in. He was the greatest thing. And then what happens the very next week?

They're yelling, crucify him, crucify him. So, sin is a deceiving, killing force that will use anything, even holy things, to accomplish its mission.

Oswald Chambers, the writer, said, Once we do realize the law's absolute demand, our life immediately becomes a fatal tragedy. That was from my utmost for his highest.

You know, that's not necessarily bad news. That's the moment we stop trusting ourselves and we turn to God. The law simply showed us.

Think about carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide, you can't smell it. You can't see it. You can't hear it. And before there were carbon monoxide detectors, people died without knowing what the problem was.

[ 25 : 30 ] For the moment, carbon monoxide detectors were invented. The detector would go off, letting you know there is carbon monoxide in the air.

There's something here that will kill you. Do something about it. The carbon monoxide detector wasn't killing people. It was a carbon monoxide. But the detector simply showed people that the problem was there.

And that's exactly what the law does. And that's what Paul is explaining to us. He said, the law is not killing us. Sin is killing us. The law just pointed it out.

So what do we do? Stop negotiating with sin. Just be honest and realize it for what it is. When we feel that pull towards sin, we just need to recognize the pattern.

Sin is pulling us in. Sin is deceiving us. And what do we do? Don't just try harder not to sin. I think that's the moment that tells us, turn to God. Ask God's Holy Spirit to give you the strength, give you the power to say no.

[ 26 : 36 ] In the power of God's Holy Spirit, we can say no to sin. Because sin is using that as a beachhead. It's using it as a base of operations. So if we understand the way sin operates, it will point us.

The moment the temptation comes, that's the clue or that's the cue for us to turn to Him. And if you're in a pattern of being defeated by sin right now, the same temptation, the same failure, the same shame, I think what this passage is telling us is, have you identified what sin actually is? It's lying to you. Turn to Him. And then as we close, the law points to the only solution that there is. Look at verses 12 and 13. Verse 12, Therefore, false conclusion, the law is holy.

There is nothing wrong with the law. And the commandment, he uses three words, and I believe explains three qualities of the law. He says, it's holy, it's just, it's good.

Has then, verse 13, has then what is good become death to me? Again, that very strong negative, meganoito in the Greek. God forbid, certainly not.

[ 27 : 48 ] God literally means may it never come to be. But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

So Paul clears the law, but what he says, he says, the law was there to show you how exceedingly sinful sin is. And that word Paul used is the word from which we get our English word hyperbole. I mean, it's like to the nth degree. The law came to show us that sin is just evil to the nth degree. It's exceedingly, exceedingly sinful.

You know, it's not just a mistake. It's not just a fall. It's not a failure. It's sin. It's a direct disobedience to God. And then very quickly, the three words that Paul uses.

First of all, he says, it's holy. It's set apart. It reflects God's character directly. Second, he said, it's just. It's righteous.

[ 28 : 50 ] And God's law is perfectly aligned with what's just simply right. You know, there's some things that are just right. They're just right. And that's what the law is. And then thirdly, he says, the law is good.

The law is beneficial. The law was designed for human flourishing. We see that in Mark chapter 10, verse 38. God gave his people the law to protect them.

God gave his people the law to show to the world around them that they had a good God. That they had a God that had their best interest at heart. They had a God that didn't want them to fall into sin and be destroyed by it.

He wanted the law to point back to him. So verse 13, sin is exposed for exactly what it is. He says, the law is not the problem. Sin is the problem.

The purpose behind it? To lead us to him. To lead us back to God. Warren Wiersbe says, the problem is not with the law. The problem is with my sinful nature.

[ 29 : 53 ] So when the law shows us how sinful sin is, it should drive us to the only place that will provide the answer to sin. And it's Jesus Christ.

And what he accomplished on the cross of Calvary. Romans chapter 8, verse 3 is coming. We're going to get to it eventually. And the law points, but Jesus delivers.

The law was never meant to save us. Just like when you go to the doctor and they say you need an MRI. The MRI doesn't heal you. It just points what's wrong with you.

And then it motivates you to go to that surgeon or go to that doctor and say, will you fix this? The MRI showed me there was a problem. Can you fix it? The law showed us there was a problem. It's sin.

And sin brings death. The wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So the nature is, or the problem is, our sin nature.

[ 30 : 55 ] C.S. Lewis described his conversion experience this way. He said, he described his own conversion to faith as he came kicking and struggling, resentful and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape.

He didn't like the law pointing out his sin. He realized he needed a sinner. And he said he came kicking and struggling until he realized Jesus was the answer.

So if you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your savior, that discomfort that you feel when the Bible convicts you of sin, it's doing exactly what it was meant to.

It's pointing you to turn to God. It's pointing you to Jesus. If you're a believer, the law still matters. All the commandments except for the Ten Commandments, except for keeping the Sabbath, is still in play.

And so the law is still good. It's pointing you to relying on the Holy Spirit's power in your life. And for those who might be tending toward legalism, toward tending to wanting to follow the law, the law is not the answer.

[ 32 : 16 ] The law just shows us what's right. The answer is the freedom that only comes and the power to live the righteous life only comes through Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit that is within us.

So here's where we land today. The law is not our enemy. Sin is our enemy. The law is just a flashlight that shows us what's wrong in our lives. So Paul spent the first part of his letter so far in the first seven chapters to show us about God, tell us about God's grace and the difference between law and grace.

So the invitation today is not a set of rules. It's not a set of behavior modification tactics. It's to point us to Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross.

If we walk out of here today, I want us to remember one thing. God's law isn't the problem. Sin is the problem. The law simply turns the lights on to what's already wrong in our life.

So today, if you have never yet completely placed your entire faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone, when you feel the weight of the law upon you, letting you know that you cannot be good enough, let that turn you.

[ 33 : 36 ] Let that motivate you to turn to Jesus Christ. All who call upon the name of the Lord, the Bible says, shall be saved, delivered from the penalty of sin, and we can become a part of God's families.

Today, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ and maybe you struggle with repeated sin, I want you to name it for what it is.

And then turn to God through the power of His Holy Spirit and ask for His strength, ask for His power, ask for His Holy Spirit to do what the law can't do, to be your power source.

Jesus Christ is the power source. So, week after next, what Paul is going to do is, he's going to turn the camera on himself as a mature believer. The same law that led him to Christ is still revealing a battle within him.

He's going to be talking about, he wants to do good, but he can't do it. And that is going to be leading us into, eventually, chapter 8.

[ 34 : 37 ] But next week, we're going to be celebrating the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We're going to be following the Lord's Supper.

So, we're going to be receiving the Lord's Supper next week. We're going to be celebrating the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Father, we come to you today. We're so thankful for your goodness.

We're thankful that you've given us your law to point us to our need, our need for you. And Lord, we pray that you would help us to understand how sinful sin is.

And that it's simply that cue for us to turn to you, the only solution to the problem. Father, if there's anyone here today that has yet to trust Christ as their Savior, I pray that you would help them to not leave this building without making sure that they know that their sin is forgiven and they're right with you.

And Father, if there's anyone here in this building today who is beset by the bondage of sin and just cannot say no, we pray, Father, that they would turn to you and admit and allow your Holy Spirit to work in their life.

[ 35 : 55 ] We thank you. We thank you, Father, for this food that we're about to receive in just a few moments. We thank you for the hands that prepared it. And Father, we thank you for your provision as well.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thanks for joining us today. We hope this message encouraged you and gave you something to apply to your life this week.

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