

ROMANS

7:7-13

The Lordship of the Law!



**The Law and
“I” (Past)**

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THE LAW AND "I" (PAST)

Verses 7-13 reveal to us that Paul is skilled in connecting his chain of thought seamlessly. This is proven since there is still a theological debate about where to divide Paul's discussion in verses 7-25. The point of controversy is the division between verses 12 and 13. Some commentaries, and this class, divide between 13 and 14; thus, beginning with verse 12 and including verse 13, these two together are "hinge" verses (more so v. 13). As we will discuss, verse 12 will draw a conclusion and verse 13 will draw together a summary of the previous section (vv.7-11).

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**SIN'S USE OF
THE LAW'S
COMMAND
(VV. 7-8A)**

7What then will we say? The Law [is] sin? May it never come to be! But I did not know sin except through the Law. Indeed, I did not understand desire except the Law was saying, “You will not covet.” ^{8a}But sin, after taking [the] opportunity, accomplished all covetousness in me through the commandment...;

Paul returns to his diatribe style in v.7 as he begins with hypothetical questions. Paul realizes that false conclusions could be drawn from what he has just said about the link between the Law and sin (cf. v.5). He has also made the same arguments in 2:23; 3:19-20; 4:15; 5:20; and 6:14. Again, this reflects the skill of Paul (as we also know that he is being carried along by the Holy Spirit) in answering objections to his theology that he knows will soon arise.

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SIN'S USE OF
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(VV. 7-8A)

⁷What then will we say? The Law [is] sin? May it never come to be! But I did not know sin except through the Law. Indeed, I did not understand desire except the Law was saying, “You will not covet.” ^{8a}But sin, after taking [the] opportunity, accomplished all covetousness in me through the commandment...;

Though Paul has forcefully denied that Law is sin (**May it never come to be!**); His use of the word “*But...*” does, however, show that there is a connection between Law and sin. He proves this connection by way of example: “*But I did not know sin except through the Law. Indeed, I did not understand desire except the Law was saying, “You will not covet.”*”

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SIN'S USE OF THE LAW'S COMMAND (VV. 7-8A)

7What then will we say? The Law [is] sin? May it never come to be! But I did not know sin except through the Law. Indeed, I did not understand desire except the Law was saying, “You will not covet.” ^{8a}But sin, after taking [the] opportunity, accomplished all covetousness in me through the commandment...;

Let's take a look at Paul's use of voice:
“You” (*second person plural – all of you*);
“We” (*first person plural*); and now his switch to **“I”** (*first person singular*). As a matter of reference, Paul will now use **“I”** fifty-two times through the rest of chapter 7. Is Paul talking about...himself? And what's the function of his use of the first person singular **“I”** and the Personal/Possessive Pronoun **“I?”**

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**SIN'S USE OF
THE LAW'S
COMMAND
(VV. 7-8A)**

There are those who believe Paul is referring to Adam, which would mean Paul is going back to Gen. 1-3. Those who support this position give the following reasons:

- + Adam for a time lived apart from the Law fully and spiritually (7:9);**
- + The command to not eat from the fruit of the forbidden tree (Gen 2:17), led Adam to desire the fruit (7:7);**
- + Sin was able to utilize that desire as its foothold to deceive Adam (7:11), thus;**
- + Sin sprang to life in the world and Adam died (spiritually) (7:9-11; cf. 5:12).**

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SIN'S USE OF
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The major objection to this position is why Paul would choose the experience of Adam in order to demonstrate the working of the *“not-yet-revealed”* Law's commandment or to serve as proof for his assertion that the Mosaic Law is not sin (7:7, 12-13).

Additionally, if you would look closely at Gen 1-3, there is the isolation of the use of deception, as we recall that Adam wasn't deceived, but Eve!

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(VV. 7-8A)

There are those who also believe that the **"I"** refers to Israel or it's rhetorical. Paul's descriptions do not match what he has been discussing concerning Israel and will be very tricky to maintain when applied to 7:14-25. It can't be rhetorical, especially since Paul uses the personal/possessive pronoun **"I"** more than once.

This leaves us with Paul referencing Paul! Why? Scripture interprets Scripture and Paul does the very same in Gal 2:19-20! What Paul says in Galatians matches his thematic statements in 7:5-6. Also, the events that Paul is describing in the first half of Gal 2:19, also with the use of a first personal singular personal/possessive pronoun **"I"**, precisely fits with the **"I"** and the Law in vv.7-11, in both vocabulary and content!

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SIN'S USE OF
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(VV. 7-8A)

Paul reveals how the Law's commandment led the **"I"** to indentify and acknowledge his own impulse toward evil. And the Law does even more! Paul graphically describes how sin, with the aid of the commandment, awakens desires which are contrary to the Law, that provokes the **"I"** to perform (sins of commission) his desires, and finally drives home the awareness of that transgression and its result!

Now Paul clarifies and expands upon the activity of 7:7, as well as his reference to the ***"passions of the sin, which [passions] were through the Law"*** in 7:5. Paul identifies the problem at its deepest level as he wrestles with the dominion and activity of sin.

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SIN'S USE OF
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(VV. 7-8A)

He portrays sins as an active and evil power which reigns in and through death, which he has done in 5:12-14. So Paul is discussing the lordship of the Law in its connection with sin and death, as well as the resulting impact upon a person's relationship with God.

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SIN, DEATH,
LIFE, THE
LAW, AND "I"
(VV.8B-11)

8b for apart from the Law, sin [is] dead.

Verse 8 ends with a very terse and striking statement: ***"... for apart from the Law, sin [is] dead."*** First, a short discussion on the revealing of the Law; the Law does not activate sin! Rather, the Law turns sin into transgression of God's revealed will (cf. 2:23). So this raises a question: What is the significance of ***"dead?"*** Well, Paul gives us the answer in a very comforting chapter: Corinthians 15. Let's review 1 Cor. 15:56.

This verse explains the interaction between death, sin, and the Law. In other words, the Law has the power to reveal and condemn sin as meriting...death!

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SIN, DEATH,
LIFE, THE
LAW, AND "I"
(VV.8B-11)

⁹And I was formerly living apart from the Law, but when the commandment came, sin revived. ¹⁰I then died. And the commandment, which was [intended] for life, this was found for me [to result] in death.

Paul states that he “...*was formerly living apart from the Law.*” This describes Paul’s life as existing under the lordship of the Law and being alive prior to what he has described in 7-8. Though he was living, it was not “*true*” life in relation to God, since the Lord wasn’t the Lord of his existence.

Thus, Paul was living apart from the heightened awareness of the Law and the nature of sin and its consequences!

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SIN, DEATH,
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(VV.8B-11)

10a I then died.

It's clear that when Paul ***“died”*** he is not referring to physical death, since the ***“I”*** continues to live and speak (cf. 10-25). However, this isn't spiritual death in its fullest sense. So verse 10a represents Paul suddenly becoming aware of sin's full power and penalty. It's important to remember that Paul is speaking of the nature of the interrelationship that exists between the Law and sin, and he asserts that the Law's command (in this case the 9th and 10th Commandments) serves to increase sin's activity and power (cf. 4:15; 5:20; and 7:5).

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SIN, DEATH,
LIFE, THE
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(VV.8B-11)

10^b And the commandment, which was [intended] for life, this was found for me [to result] in death. 11 For sin, after taking [the] opportunity, deceived me through the commandment and, through it, killed [me].

You may have notice that the last half of v.10 has been joined with v.11, since they complement each other. These verses review what was just stated by Paul. They detail what was already presumed. Paul is affirming that the Law’s commandment was intended for life, which actually clears the Law from blame in causing the death of the **“I”** (Paul). Yet, as v.11 reveals, even this aspect of the Law was able to be diabolically controlled by sin.

What does this mean?

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SIN, DEATH,
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Sin can deceive man (Paul) into “*keeping score*” with God and others. Due to the weakness of the flesh, sin is able to manipulate the Law in order to provoke man; and then, sin uses the commandment to deceive man into believing he can satisfactorily fulfill the Law! Thereby, the “**I**” can obtain life which the Law promises. This deception occurs whenever man imagines that he can secure the final verdict of “*righteous*” from God by his own works of the Law...in spite of his sin (**cf. St. Luke 18:18-23**).

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**The Law is
Exonerated;
Sin is
Exposed
(vv. 12-13)**

¹²So, on the one hand, the Law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³Therefore did that which is good become death for me? May it never come to be! But sin, in order that sin might be exposed, was accomplishing death [in] me through the good, so that, through the commandment, sin might come to be exceedingly sinful.

Paul now arrives at a very critical point of his analysis of the Law, which he signals by the use of “*So.*” Paul is addressing the hypothetical question of v.7, “*the Law [is] sin?*” Paul’s answer reveals that he is not an “*antinomian*” and he actually speaks against antinomianism.*

***The view that Christians are free of all moral law.**

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¹²So, on the one hand, the Law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. The Law is not guilty; it reflects the purity, the holiness of God (Is. 6:3) and that God demands the same from man.

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Furthermore, Paul declares the commandment, which stands as a synonym of the Law, is also ***“holy and righteous and good.”*** These adjectives are used to point out the origin, nature, and effects of the Law. God’s holy Law was intended to be beneficial for all people.

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Verse 13, then, is the “hinge” verse! It summarizes Paul’s arguments in vv.7-11 and picks up what was just stated about the Law in v.12. And Paul reaches the same conclusion: ***“May it never come to be!”***

The verse then ends with two purpose clauses, which parallels the thought in vv.7-9 and indicate the twofold purpose for which ***“I”*** was confronted with the Law. The two clauses and their purpose:

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**The Law is
Exonerated;
Sin is
Exposed
(vv. 12-13)**

13 Therefore did that which is good become death for me? May it never come to be! But sin, in order that sin might be exposed, was accomplishing death [in] me through the good, so that, through the commandment, sin might come to be exceedingly sinful.

+ “in order that sin might be exposed, was accomplishing death [in] me through the good...”, sin is unmasked by the Law and is shown to what it truly is: open rebellion against the command of God.

+ “so that, through the commandment, sin might come to be exceedingly sinful.” Through the commandment, sin became even more sinful and its power is enhanced and its true character is exposed. So the end product of the confrontation between “I” and the Law’s command is:

death!

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Our Lord's Work for you

**The
Conclusion!**

Two Key Points in Verses 7-13:

First, Paul clearly expresses the destructive effect of the Law in exposing, convicting, and arousing sin. And the blame for all this is laid squarely at the feet of our sin...not the Law!

Secondly, the recognition of death worked by sin is at least part of what God intended to accomplish by revealing the Law's commands. One of God's purposes in the Law is to show sin for what it is and to demonstrate clearly the need for the Holy Gospel, His Good News, which accomplishes that which the Law's command demands and is unable to do.

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7:14-25

**Next
Week**

The Lordship of the Law!



**The Law and
“I” (Present)**