

OBJECTIONS TO JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: WHAT THEN IS THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW? (PT4)

Romans 7:7-25

Introduction: Justification by faith alone raises important questions about the role of the law

I. If the Law Doesn't Save, What is Its Purpose? (v.7-13)

A. The Law Defines Sin For Us (v.7)

- o Only God can reveal what is a sin; only He can define right and wrong
- o Why do you think Paul chose the example of coveting to prove his point?

B. The Law Stirs Up Sin in Us (v.8)

- o The law provides an "opportunity" that sin seizes upon
- o *Illustration: Sin is like fire, and the law is like oxygen. Fire is what burns down a house, not oxygen. But oxygen makes the fire grow.*
- o Why do we insist on doing something just because it is forbidden?

C. The Law Exposes Sin in Us (v.9-11)

- o "I was once alive apart from the law" (v.9). Paul is not saying he had spiritual life apart from the law, but he is saying that he thought he was alive before he understood the law's true meaning.
- o "but when the commandment came...I died" (v.9). Paul is saying that when he realized the depth of his sin, then it brought death to him.
- o Big point: One purpose of the law is to expose how deep our sin really goes (which is deeper than we think), so that we will not trust in ourselves but trust in Christ.

D. Summary: The Law is Good (v.12-13)

- o The law is not the problem, sin is the problem. The law is a good gift because it reveals our sin and shows us our need for the gospel.
- o Application: What role should the law play in evangelism?

II. The Ongoing Christian Struggle to Keep the Law (v.14-25)

A. Paul Acknowledges that his "Old Self" Still Wants to Sin



- o "I am of the flesh, sold under sin" (v.14). "For I know nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (v.18)
 - Paul is not denying the new power of the Spirit within him. Instead he is acknowledging there is still a strong remnant of sin that he is fighting against.
 - o "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want" (v.19). "Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells within me" (v.20).
 - Notice that Paul acknowledges he really does have a genuine desire to do what is right, but also acknowledges that he often does the wrong thing.
 - Key point: when Paul does the wrong thing, it is not the real him doing it!
- B. Paul Acknowledges His "New Self" Wants to Please God
- o "For I have the desire to do what is right" (v.18).
 - o "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being" (v.22)
 - Paul has a new heart that loves Christ and wants to serve him.
- C. The Christian Life is an Ongoing Struggle Between Your Old and New Self
- o An Encouragement: Struggling with sin is not a bad sign, but a good one. It means you are in the fight! Be concerned if you don't struggle with sin.
 - o As we struggle with sin, we always turn to Christ: "Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v.24-25).



Discussion Groups

1. Can you give an example of how the Law helped you see that your sin was deeper than you realized?

2. How has your struggle with sin looked similar to the one Paul describes? How do you see your old self and new self at war with one another?

3. How is Paul's own experience both an encouragement to you and also a warning to you?

