

1. **Introduction**: Continuing with Paul's discussion on the value of the Law to believers.
2. **Three Possible Attitudes Toward the Law**: Paul writes of three possible attitudes toward the Law. The first two, he rejects. The third, he commends. John Stott describes the three attitudes as "legalism," "antinomianism," and "law-fulfilling freedom."
3. **Legalism**: Legalists believe their relationship with God depends on obedience to the Law.
  - They seek to be both justified and sanctified by obedience to the Law. The difficulty is the Law's inability to save them.
4. **Antinomianism**: Antinomians go to the opposite extreme and blame their problems on the Law. They completely reject it and claim to be free from all Law.
5. **Law-Fulfilling Freedom**: This view-point preserves a necessary balance. It is the right way to describe believers living under the Law. They are free from requirements of the Law to obtain justification and sanctification. They are free to fulfill God's moral Law.
6. **Role of Human Nature in Determining Attitude Toward the Law**: A believer's human nature is the instrument that determines their attitude toward the Law. A believer's human nature consists of two opposing sub-natures: their new Godly sub-nature and their sin nature.
  - Regeneration brings new life to the dead, fallen spiritual life. The new spiritual life is a sub-nature inclined toward God. The old sin-nature remains as a second sub-nature inclined toward sin. The two sub-natures are in constant conflict.
  - How do these human sub-natures differ from the two natures of Jesus? (1.) Jesus two natures are distinct, independent, do not interact. He has a complete divine nature and a complete human nature. (2.) Jesus' human nature like Adam's as-created nature is holy and sinless. (3.) The 2 human sub-natures do interact, are inner-dependent.
  - Ultimately, God will eliminate the believer's "inclined-toward sin" sub-nature, but not until glorification. Meanwhile, thoughts, words, and deeds are those of the one person who has two sub-natures that oppose one another. Each sub-nature provides inputs to decision-making.
  - The two sub-natures oppose one another, but one nature will win in all situations. The winner will control the resulting thoughts, words, and deeds. When sin occurs, it is not merely the "old sinful sub-nature" that sins. The whole person who sins (1 John 1:10).
  - Paul's continuing argument shows the Law is not responsible for sin or death. He says that the Law itself is holy, but it is incapable of making anyone holy.
  - Verse 7:7 introduces a new question. Does being "*released from the law*" imply the Law is bad or is sin? Paul says, the Law itself is holy, but it is incapable of making anyone holy.
7. **Romans 7:7-13**: *What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." <sup>8</sup> But sin, seizing an opportunity*

*through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. <sup>9</sup> I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. <sup>10</sup> The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. <sup>11</sup> For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. <sup>12</sup> So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. <sup>13</sup> Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.*

- The Law provides moral guidance, but cannot justify or sanctify anyone. Justification and sanctification for believers are both “apart from the Law” in that no longer do either of them require perfect obedience to the Law. Both are enabled by the perfectly obedient life of Jesus under the Law and His atoning death.
- Justification is by faith in Christ. Sanctification is by the transforming work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- Breaking the Law is sin. Striving to not break the Law points believers to right behavior. The Law is God’s revealed will for how His people should live. Breaking the Law is sin, but because human sin nature delights in doing that which is forbidden, the Law can also provoke sin by stirring desire to do that which the Law forbids.
- Being provoked to sin by the Law is usually referred to as “perversity” meaning doing a thing only because it is forbidden. Perversity is joy of wrongdoing just for the fun of it.
- It is often said that human nature is inclined to think and do the opposite of what is commanded.

8. **About the Nature of Sin:** Understanding “perversity” is important for understanding the nature of sin. Augustine speaks to this issue in **Confessions, Book II, chapter 6.**

- When committing sin, there is always an immediate motive such as greed or anger. But also an underlying “spiritual heart-motive” that enjoys what is forbidden for no reason other than it is forbidden, a desire to do as I please and oppose God without penalty.
- Augustine illustrates perversity by a personal example. He had an abundance of pears but stole more anyway. Not needing them, he threw the stolen ones away. Why did he steal?
- God’s Law places limits on us that remind us we are not sovereign, nor can we live as we please since there is a Sovereign who has dominion over us and establishes limits.
- Everyone would like to be more like God, especially in having the ability and power to do whatever they please.
- The first temptation recorded in Scripture came from the serpent. He said to Eve do what I recommend and **“you will be like God”** (Genesis 3:5).
- What an opportunity! Eve could become more like God and all it would take is just the simple desirable act of eating a luscious piece of fruit. It was an overwhelming temptation. It is often like that when we are tempted – an opportunity to meet our desire with no apparent down-side.

9. **Words Used for Death Signify Different Things:** In verse 6, *“having died”* refers to verse 4, *“died to the law through the body of Christ,”* referring to believers’ spiritual death in Christ ending the requirement for perfect obedience to the Law to achieve righteousness.
- In verse 8 *“For apart from the Law, sin lies dead”* refers to the fact that a believer’s sin nature can be either active or inactive. Active sinning occurs when the sin nature is stimulated. Lack of awareness of the Law’s commands leads to a lack of stimulation of the desire to sin.
10. **What Does Paul Mean When He Said: “I was once alive apart from the law.”**
- In Paul’s unconverted life as a Jewish boy from a devout family and then later as a Pharisee, he would have always been “under the Law,” never “apart from the Law.”
  - What does he mean? It seems he means that he never realized the true requirements of the Law until he recognized coveting as being internal not external. The sin of coveting can lead to external sin but is not in itself “external.” It can remain entirely internal. Coveting is strong desire for that which does not belong to you.
  - Being “alive” seems to refer to the self-perception that he was spiritually alive and being pleasing to God. His realization was that external things done in obedience to the Law did not satisfy the requirement for the more basic “internal or heart” obedience. He could sin in his heart and not actually break the Law through external actions.
  - He realized that though he had been externally obedient to the Law, he had been spiritually dead to the essence of the Law and, as a result, was not truly pleasing God.
  - Paul was devastated, but the experience put him firmly on God’s right path – obedience in and from the spiritual heart.
11. **External Obedience:** Pharisees, like Paul was before his conversion, approached obeying the Law by defining what they thought to be an exhaustive list of external “do and do not.”
- Paul declared that, when he was a Pharisee, he was blameless before the Law (Phil 3:6). He obeyed all the rules established by the Pharisees in the belief that obeying the external rules fulfilled the Law.
  - Now Paul knows that is not the case. The Law is first a thing of the heart.
  - If a person’s focus is on external obedience, the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, dealing with the invisible inner person is a big problem. External obedience to the first 9 commandments seems to be possible, but the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is an altogether different matter.
  - Obedience to the command *“do not covet”* begins internally. It depends on thoughts, imagination, emotions, and words, including things that seem to just pop into your mind from nowhere. When you accept the inner focus of the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, you realize obedience begins internally.
  - In verses 7:9-11, the phrases *“sin came alive and I died,”* *proved death to me,”* and *“through it killed me”* seem to mean Paul was stunned when he finally realized that covetousness is an internal sin that is humanly impossible to control.

- Although in his earlier life Paul had overlooked the truth that covetousness is an uncontrollable internal sin, he now realized that thoughts and imaginations over which he had little if any control could cause him to disobey the Law.
- Furthermore, when he broke the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment by coveting, he would inevitably break at least one of the other 9 commandments. No doubt Paul fell on his knees thanking God for His provision of righteousness apart from the Law. That's exactly what each of us should do.
- Paul recognized that, without God's provision of righteousness apart from the Law, he and everyone else would inevitably violate the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment by desiring things possessed by others, thereby breaking the Law.
- Furthermore, there didn't seem to be anything he or anyone else could do to avoid that disaster, but God, knowing everything about us, provided a solution to the problem with His gift of righteousness apart from the Law.
- Paul's realization of the implications that thoughts of covetousness could bypass his mental control capabilities provoked him to "*all kinds of covetousness.*" For a time, he died to righteousness, that is, righteous thoughts were blocked by covetous thoughts.
- In verses 12-13, a hurting Paul appears to ask is it possible that the Law, which is good, is the source of sin and death. His answer is NO! Indwelling inclination to sin coming from his sin nature is the problem – not the Law.
- In verses 7:7-13, Paul uses first person pronouns and past tense verbs. In verses 7:14-25, Paul uses first person pronouns and present tense verbs as he argues that the Law is holy and good but has no power to save from sin or to produce holiness.
- Linguistically, the natural view of first-person pronouns and past-tense verbs in 7:7-13 is that they refer to Paul's past pre-conversion life. Likewise, the natural linguistic view of the first-person pronouns and present-tense verbs in 7:14-25 is that they refer to his present, post-conversion situation. Not all commentators agree.

12.**Next:** Romans 7:14-25.