

Introduction: the Problem (7:7a)

7:7a *What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?*

- Paul has made it clear that nobody can be right before God by obeying God’s Law:
 - “...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (3:20).
 - In fact, the apostle has even said that “while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions...were aroused by the Law” (7:5).
- If the Law only brings out the worst in us, maybe we should scrap the Law. It seems to be the problem. Isn’t that our nature? See the problem as everywhere else but ourselves, even if it means pointing a blaming finger at God?

The Law Reveals Sin (7:7b)

7:7b *May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.”*

- Do you remember what Paul said about all of humanity?
READ Romans 3:9-12.
- Nobody believes this about themselves! Even Christians, under too much influence from the world, will sometimes say, “people are basically good” (the exact opposite of what the Bible clearly says).

The Cornered Beast Lashes Out (7:8-11)

Fuel for the Sinful Fire (7:8)

7:8 *But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.*

- “...apart from the Law sin is dead.” It is the Law of God that defines sin, for “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).¹

The Wages of Sin Is Death (7:9)

7:9 *I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died...*

- Some people, ignorant of what the Bible says about God’s demands in the Law, think that they are good enough in themselves to be accepted before God.
- One of Jesus’ primary means of showing people their need for a savior was to apply the Law to them (see Matthew 5:17-48). In other words, by His application of the Law to the human heart, He brought God’s commandment to bear so that the sinner ceased to have the false view that he/she was “alive” even though he/she was actually spiritually “dead.”
READ the exchange between Jesus and the rich man in Luke 18:18-27 to see this clearly.

Food Becomes Poison (7:10)

7:10...and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 7:11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

- Galatians 3 is helpful to us here:
 - The Law brings a curse to sinful humanity (Galatians 3:10,13).

¹ This is why David can sing to God, “against You, You only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4). He committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2-5) and arranged to have her husband, Uriah the Hittite, killed in battle (2 Samuel 11:14-21), so this phrase seems strange! Remember, though, that it is God Who made adultery (Exodus 20:14//Deuteronomy 5:18) and murder (Exodus 20:13//Deuteronomy 18:17) forbidden according to His Law. These violations, though Bathsheba and Uriah were affected, were violations of Law God Himself gave. Sin is a violation of the Law, and is against the Law-Giver.

- The Law does not change God's Gospel purpose/promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:15-19), but was given to reveal sinful humanity's need for that Gospel (3:19).
- The Law had no power to grant life (3:21). The Law promises life to those who obey it (Leviticus 18:5), but does not provide the power to sinful humanity to obey it. Only the Spirit, given to those saved by the power of the Gospel, can do that.
- Here's the question: what changed? Did God's good Law become sinful, or did Adam become sinful in relationship to God's Law?
- Sin twists and lies about God's will as revealed in His commandments in the following ways:
 1. It convinces us that as long as we are obeying the commandments on the outside, we are right before God, even though the Bible tells us that God judges our thoughts and feelings according to His Law, too (none of us pass this examination).
 2. It convinces us that God's commandments are too restrictive, or that God uses them to keep good things away from us.
 3. It convinces us that God's commandments are optional, and that we are so great that we can freely decide whether or not we will be held accountable by them.
 4. It makes holiness and righteousness and God's will look unattractive.
 5. It discounts the consequences for breaking God's Law.

Backstory: the Serpent, the Garden, and Us

- The serpent is the original sinner (violator of God's Law), and so we should hear his hissing behind Paul's personification of sin. What's the serpent's motivation?

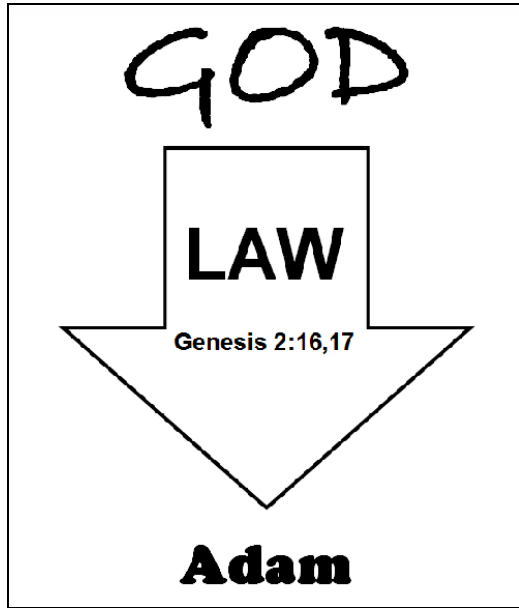
- The serpent is motivated by hate of God. He cannot harm God, so he is determined to destroy those who bear God's image: humanity (Genesis 1:27).
 1. First, he uses God's Law to tempt to violate that Law.
 2. Second, he then accuses us of breaking God's Law, knowing that the penalty for breaking God's Law is eternal spiritual death – punishment in hell forever.²
- While the serpent was involved in the temptation of Genesis 3:1-6, we don't need his help anymore to violate God's Law. After Adam's fall into sin, we have inherited a sin nature that will always choose against God's Law.³

Same Backstory, but Told with Infographics

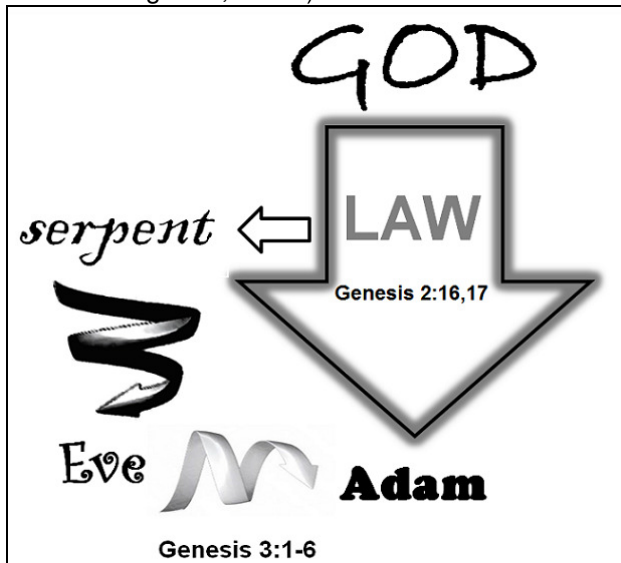
- God gives Adam a good Law (it's good because it reflects His eternal, righteous, and perfect character):

² Consider the case of Job, who was *“blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil”* (Job 1:1). The devil attempted to use horrible circumstances to tempt Job to *“curse [God] to [His] face”* (1:11). The devil appeared before God to accuse Job. In Zechariah, the prophet sees a courtroom scene where Satan is accusing the high priest of Judah in that day (Zechariah 3:1-7). In the Revelation, the serpent/dragon is called *“he who accuses them before our God day and night”* (12:10).

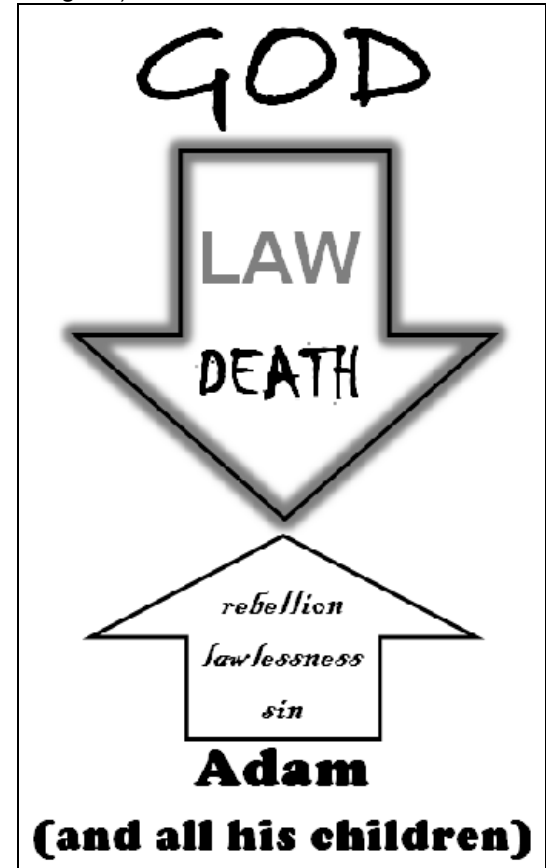
³ *“...through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners”* (Romans 5:12,19). “By his free choice man [Adam] sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, III).



- The serpent uses God's good Law to tempt Eve (and, though her, Adam):



- As children of Adam, we have inherited his sin nature; all of us are born in this world as rebels against God's "holy and righteous and good" Law. Our rebellion earns the Law's curse for rebellion, which is eternal spiritual death (separation from God, the Source of good):



We saw this connection between Adam's original sin and our sin nature in Romans 5:12-21.

The Message paraphrase gives us another way of looking at this: “Don’t you remember how it was? I do, perfectly well. The law code started out as an excellent piece of work. What happened, though, was that sin found a way to pervert the command into a temptation, making a piece of ‘forbidden fruit’ out of it. The law code, instead of being used to guide me, was used to seduce me. Without all the paraphernalia of the law code, sin looked pretty dull and lifeless, and I went along without paying much attention to it. But once sin got its hands on the law code and decked itself out in all that finery, I was fooled, and fell for it. The very command that was supposed to guide me into life was cleverly used to trip me up, throwing me headlong. So sin was plenty alive, and I was stone dead. But the law code itself is God’s good and common sense, each command sane and holy counsel.”

A Songs Only the Redeemed Can Sing (7:12)

7:12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Window into His Will

- God’s Holy Spirit will never lead us to do anything contrary to His Law and commandments.
- Since the Law is a reflection of God’s unchanging character and will, Paul can say that the Law, like the Law-Giver, is “*holy and righteous and good.*”

Application

- When Paul says “*we are not under law but under grace*” (Romans 6:15), he does not mean that we are lawless!
- When Paul comes to teach us to love one another, he cites from the Ten Commandments and the Second-Greatest Commandment of the Law as authoritative! He would not do this if we were free from God’s moral commandments! **READ Romans 13:8b-10.**
- Before we come to Christ, the Law condemns us and shows us we need a Savior Who is the Law’s Goal: “*...the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why*

not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in Him...they don’t understand God’s way of making people right with Himself. Refusing to accept God’s way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in Him are made right with God” (Romans 9:31,32; 10:3,4, New Living Translation).

- When we come to Christ by faith, we are empowered by His Spirit to live according to God’s will: “*...if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law*” (Romans 3:31, N.L.T.).

Rejoicing in God’s Will

- Psalms 19 and 119 are songs rejoicing in God’s will as revealed in His Law and commandments. Only the Christian can truly sing these songs. We have been freed from the punishment we deserve as violators of God’s Law, and are now filled with the Spirit, Who writes God’s “*holy and righteous and good*” will on our hearts. We are happiest when we are in conformity with God’s commandments.

**Sin separates us from God,
and earns His eternal wrath.
God’s Law alone defines sin and shows us to be
sinners by our rebellion against it.
The Law is good because
it reflects God’s unchangingly good character;
we are sinners because of our reaction to His Law.
Praise God, for His Law leads us
to His Savior from our sin, Jesus Christ!**