



[Leader Tip: A fun icebreaker game that ties to the theme of this lesson is the “Breaking the Law” game by Jeff Bachman. You can find it at DYM here: <https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/p/breaking-the-law/games-1414.html>]

[Slide 1] The book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul and is a critical part of the New Testament when it comes to discussing and understanding the doctrine of the church. What’s fascinating to me is that Paul wasn’t a part of the Roman church; he didn’t start it, he hadn’t been there, but he did want to build connections with them and give some needed instruction. He wrote this letter towards the end of his third missionary journey, most likely around AD 58.¹

[Slide 2] Paul opened the book with his thesis statement; *Romans 1:17 (NLT) This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”*

Having laid the groundwork that salvation is through faith, Paul began the process of making his case as he systematically moved through Romans. This was a big deal for the Jewish believers because they were still focused on the Old Testament law. When we hear the word “law,” we tend to think of speed limits, the police, criminal behaviors, things like that but for the ancient Jewish people, the law referred to Moses’ writings, the instructions on how to worship and obey God. There are 613 commandments in the Old Testament that they tried to follow to gain favor in God’s eyes. Paul’s thesis statement was in direct response to that emphasis.

In chapters 3-5, he established that the Law cannot save. In chapter 6, he established that it cannot sanctify. And then in the first six verses of chapter

¹ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8*, (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1991), xviii.

7 he revealed that the Law cannot condemn a believer of sin.² Given that context, it would be easy to see how the reader in Rome might have wondered if Paul was labeling the Law a bad thing, which triggered Paul's explanation in our passage today both of its value and limitations.

[Slide 3] I want to approach the text with two broad categories; verses 7-13 focus on the **relationship between sin and the Law**, while verses 14-25 focus on the **relationship between sin and the believer**.³

[Slide 4] *Romans 7:7-13 (NLT)* ⁷ Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet."⁸ But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.⁹ At one time I lived without understanding the law.

[Slide 5] *But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life,¹⁰ and I died. So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead.¹¹ Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me.¹² But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.*

[Slide 6] ¹³ *But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes.*

[Slide 7] **1. The Law reveals sin** (v.7). With his question, "am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful?" Paul demonstrates that he anticipated the previously mentioned false assumptions to be a possible rebuttal. And with that simple question, he launched into his defense. He explained that the Law reveals his sin or informs him of sin that he may have been unaware of – the Law itself is not the sin, it is his actions that are. In his phrase, "it was the law that **showed** me my sin," he used the Greek word **εγνων**, which is translated "showed" here, but is the Greek word for knowledge. In this context, it conveys a type of knowledge that is gained through experience,

² Moo, Douglas J, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 423.

³ MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, 365-393.

as opposed to intuitive knowledge.⁴ This is critical in Paul's explanation because it pointed to the Law's ability to illustrate and explain what qualifies as sinful behavior, something he needed to learn to do.

[Slide 8] **2. The Law provokes sin** (v.8). Stating that "sin used this command" to trigger sinful actions, Paul again made the point that the Law is not sinful and does not cause sin. Instead, it is the sinful desires within men and women, that upon hearing something is prohibited, sinfully desire it. A simple example of this principle is found in painting contractors. Very rarely will professional painters hang a "wet paint" sign on something they have painted. Why? Because in normal situations, it is very rare that a person will want to touch a wall, yet simply hanging that sign with two simple words, "wet paint," seems to trigger a desire in every passerby to reach out and touch the wall as if to see if it is really wet.⁵ There is something within the sinful heart that rebels against instruction, so while the Law does, on the one hand, reveal the presence of sin, by defining the sin, a fallen person may find themselves now desiring to do something they were unaware of before the Law opened their eyes to it.

But then Paul went on to say, "If there were no law, sin would not have that power." How could this be? It is still part of the idea contained in this verse; that sin uses the Law as a launching point, something to react to. As sin has been around since before Genesis 1:1 (Satan's sin), it is not dependent on the Law for existence since the Law came much later. However, framed in the understanding of this passage, sin is less active without a list of prohibitions to trigger reactions in the sinful man or woman. Author John MacArthur wrote that it is not so much that sin is dead, but that it is dormant, or not fully active.⁶

[Slide 9] **3. The Law ruins the sinner** (v.9-11). Verse 9 opens with the statement, "At one time I lived without understanding the law", as in, "I [Paul] was existing" before knowing the Law.⁷ Granted, that would be referring to a very early stage of his life, as Paul would have, as a Jewish

⁴ Moo, *New International Commentary*, 433.

⁵ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 536.

⁶ MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, 372.

⁷ Moo, *New International Commentary*, 437.



THE LAW

ROMANS 7:7-25

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- With which of Paul's statements do you most identify? Why?
- How can the law as depicted in verses 7-12 be holy, good and upright while also producing death at the same time?
- Many of us do not stop to consider what life was like under the law; how is this section relevant to us as believers today?
- Paul lamented that he wanted to do good but did evil instead. What has that been like for you? What can we do about this frustration as believers?
- How is it possible for sin to use God's good commands for evil (verse 13)?
- What is the dilemma that Paul highlighted in verses 21-24? What do God's desire, plan and fulfillment through Jesus to rescue us from this dilemma reveal to you about God's character and purposes?



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