

THE LAW IS GOOD

Romans 7:7-14

INTRODUCTION:

In last week's sermon I preached on being free from the law. The bondage to the law in Romans 7 is called bondage to the old husband. *How many of you ladies would like to be free from your 'old husband?' Don't raise your hand Lana Jo! Well this is not the husband I'm talking about.*

As creations of God all mankind is bound to God's moral law with its penalties and blessings. For the law-breaker there is condemnation and certain punishment. We are all law-breakers. We are bound by the law due to our failure to keep the law. But through Christ we now can be free from that law of condemnation. Believers in Christ are free from the condemnation of the law. Christians are free from the dominion of that law. Christians are free from defective views of the law. But does that mean then that the law today doesn't have any positive purpose?

Some say that Christians have no relationship with God's law today. They are known as antinomians. "Anti" means against and 'nomos' means law. Antinomians are against looking to the law as guidance or are against seeking to keep the God as a way of Christian living. Some others say 'yes', the law is applicable to Christians today to live by. It is required to win God's approval and love and salvation. This is called legalism. Both of these views are the wrong as to the use of the law.

Paul wrote to Timothy and said that the law is good if one uses it lawfully. **(1 Tim 1:8 NKJV) "But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully."** There is a right way to use the law and a wrong way. *Just like a fire is good if it is used properly, but can be very bad if used wrongly, so is the law. In the cold outdoors a fire can be built to keep you warm. A fire can be used to cook food on. A fire can be used to give light. These are good uses of fire. But if you stick your hand in a fire, what will happen? You will get burned. You will suffer pain. This is the wrong use of a fire.* The law is the same. There are some wrong uses of the law and there are good uses of the law.

In this passage Paul concludes in verse 12 calls the law holy, just, and good.

(Rom 7:12 NKJV) Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

What are the good uses of the law today? Reformed theology speaks of three uses of the law. Let's look at these three uses of the law today to see how to use the law lawfully.

THE LAW RESTRAINS SIN AND PROMOTES RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A NATION

First, the law is good in that it restrains sin and promotes righteousness in a nation. One reason God gave His moral law to mankind is to restrain sin and promote righteousness. Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.

Man left to himself without God's law will plunge into lawlessness. Even the secular philosophers will teach this.

Thomas Hobbes, a 17th century philosopher, promoted a pessimistic view of man in the state of nature. In the state of nature mankind has the primary motivation of fighting for survival to get what belongs to others and in turn to fight to protect what is theirs. Thus, as long as there is no common power to maintain order, all people are in a state of war with one another--a war of all against all. This situation is such that no one can trust anyone else, and everyone is in constant fear of violent death. This sounds like our society today.

Now Hobbes' solution was a form of the political theory called a "Social Contract." This is where everyone in a society agrees to give up some of their freedom and rights to an authority over all, like the state, to make and enforce laws which will keep people from living according to the "state of nature," i.e. a war of all against all.

Through the social contract arrangement a society can live peacefully, etc. This is well and good and certainly Hobbes showed the need for law because of the natural heart of man, but there are some problems with this approach. Unless the Sovereign authority is guided by God's moral law, there will be basic defects in his law and there is no assurance that the Sovereign will not abuse his power. There needs to be a law above the law and that law above the law is God's law.

There is a struggle in our nation today over the relevance of the Ten Commandments as a public standard of righteousness. Although historically our nation has affirmed the relevance of the Ten Commandments as a guide to national civility and righteousness, today there are powerful forces at work to remove God's law as a restraint for sin. We are all familiar with the Judge Roy Moore of

Alabama who was required to remove a granite monument of the Ten Commandments. We have thrown out the displaying of the Ten Commandments in our public schools. God's Ten Commandments are not allowed in our judicial courts and we do not look to them in our ethical deliberations. Thus man has become the measure of all things. He will eventually fall back into the state of nature, into a state of lawlessness.

The ignorance of God's moral law and the movement to keep it from serving its purpose to restrain sin and promote righteousness is a very serious problem. What is a Christian to do about this situation? I believe that we are to pray for our nation. We are to live as examples of (God's law) abiding citizens. But we also are to not give into the forces to remove any vestiges of our national heritage of being a nation based on Christian principles. We are to stand for righteousness as embodied in God's law. But ultimately we are to realize that God will have the final word over all nations response to His Law. We must live by faith in God's promises.

The law is good in that it restrains sin and unrighteousness in a nation. Let's use it that way!

THE LAW BRINGS A PERSON UNDER CONVICTION OF SIN

Second, the law is good in that it brings us to Christ by bringing us under the conviction of sin. This is the point Paul emphasizes in this Romans' passage. In verse 7 he says:

Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

A primary function of the law today is to bring a person under the conviction of sin. This is positive because without the conviction of sin, no one will turn to Christ as the Savior from sin.

"I would not have known sin except through the law." Paul says. John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, said, "*The man who does not know the nature of the Law, cannot know the nature of the Savior.*"

This has some important implication for preaching the Gospel. The Gospel today will not be understood unless sin is understood and sin cannot be understood but by the law of God. Therefore in preaching the Gospel we must start with the law!

Walter Chancery makes this observation about much current day evangelism:

Present-day preaching only pays lip service to the concept that a man must recognize himself to be a sinner before he can genuinely embrace the Saviour. The average witnessing booklet insists on the question, 'Do you believe that all men are sinners?' If there is any hesitation, you establish the point with, 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God' [Romans 3:23]. But no definition of sin is included. There is scarcely a man alive, including the most hardened sinner, who will deny this broad statement. Anyone would answer, 'Of course I am less holy than God. No one is perfect.' The young ruler would have conceded as much. But such is hardly an acknowledgment of sin. He would still deny that he was a liar, an adulterer, a thief.

*"Preach 90% Law and 10% grace." **John Wesley***

*"They must be slain by the Law before they can be made alive by the gospel." **Charles Spurgeon***

The law of God is given to us to bring us to a conviction of sin, not as to leave us groveling in the dirt and mud, but to turn us to the Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Paul affirms this in the book of Galatians:

(Gal 3:24 NKJV) Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law's purpose is to bring us to Christ by showing us our need for Christ. This is a good use of the law.

How are we to use this good use of the law? We are to expound the details of God's moral law as to what is sin, present Christ to them as the Savior from sin and then pray that the Holy Spirit will use it to convict the person to their need for Christ!

THE LAW IS A GUIDE TO OUR DUTIES AS CHRISTIANS

Thirdly, the law is good in that it is God's authoritative guide for our duties as Christians.

The simple fact is that God's moral law is a description of God's holy character and we are to be like God. **"Be holy, for I am holy, says the Lord God."** What makes God's law moral is not that God said it, but that it reflects His

holy nature. God's holy nature is the foundation for having an absolute standard of morality. If morality is not based on God's character, then it is based on man's ideas about right and wrong. This standard is relative according to who has the power to enforce their morality on others.

Most would agree that the Old Testament saints were under the law. What was their attitude towards God's law? They accepted it as their guide to life and blessings and they rejoiced in it. For the Old Testament saint the law is a delight to the heart. Old Testament saints the law as God's loving voice of instruction. Listen to the rapturous words of David, "**The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much fine gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.**" (Ps 19:10-11). David also proclaimed, "**I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees. I will not neglect your word.**" The law is at heart an expression of God's character and reflects His will for His children; therefore it serves as an authoritative guide to living the Christian life.

As Christians we are to become like Christ. We become like Christ by living according to God's law as Christ lived by God's law. The Ten Commandments are a good authoritative guideline for understanding what the true character of God is. The Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament epistles as still being in effect.

God's moral law is summarized by Christ when he was asked what is the greatest commandment and he replied that it is "loving God with all your heart" and "loving your neighbor as yourself." On these hang all the law and prophets, says Jesus. If we are to live like Jesus we will use the moral law of God as a guide for living.

This is a good use of God's good law!

CONCLUSION:

The law is holy and just and good as Paul says, but we are weak and sinful. Christ is the answer to the law's condemnation. Christ is also the answer to carrying out the responsibilities of God's law. Christ is the embodiment of God's law. Embrace Christ and you will embrace the law of God in the proper way! You will affirm it as a means of restraining sin in a nation. You will use it as a tool of evangelism to help people see their need for Christ. You will love it as a good guide to show your love to God and neighbor.

Amen? Amen!