

# Romans 7:7-13 — The Law Reveals The Power And Deceptiveness Of Sin

## Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

## Revision of Romans 6:1-14—A warning to avoid habitual sin

There are three things that every believer needs to know, believe, and do to overcome habitual sin:

1. **Know:** understand that the power of sin was broken once and for all at the cross (v 6),
2. **Reckon:** believe this to be true (v 11), and
3. **Yield:** The evidence or result of genuine belief or reckoning is that they will habitually **yield** or submit their body to the Lord instead of sin (vs 12-13).

## Revision of Romans 6:15-7:6—A warning to avoid occasional sin and avoid legalism (which leads to sin)

A) Three general principles that will help us to keep from dabbling in sin (6:15-23):

1. As when we were unbelievers we gave ourselves fully in our service to sin, so now as believers we should also give ourselves fully to serving God, our new master.
2. Once we start down a particular path, we will want to keep going down that path, so choose carefully which path you start to go down because it's hard to stop once you start.
3. Everything we do will have a consequence, whether good or bad.

B) Understanding that we are no longer under law, but under grace—Three principles that help us to avoid legalism (7:1-6):

1. I died to the law when I died with Christ, the day I was born again. Therefore, I am no longer under any obligation to keep the law. I no longer *have* to keep the law in order to earn or merit something. Now, my new nature *wants* to keep it, but I don't *have* to keep it. The law can no longer condemn me when I break it.
2. When I rose with Christ, I was married to Him (previously I was married to, and therefore under the authority of, the law). Now, instead of having to trying to maintain a certain standard of righteousness, I just enjoy being married to another, to Jesus. Now it's not a matter of how good I can be, but rather, simply drawing close to Jesus and enjoying a love relationship with Him. Instead of trying harder and harder to better obey and please my ex-spouse, Mr Law, now I just draw closer to God and my desire to obey increases—greater love equals greater obedience (If obedience is lacking, then the problem is not a lack of human effort, but a lack of love).
3. I was freed from the law so that I could bear fruit to God. Legalism is me trying to be righteous or good enough by my own human effort, operating according to the desires of my sinful nature. *Living according to my sinful nature will only produce the negative and divisive fruit of the sinful nature.* Now, instead of trying hard to be good, I just draw close to God and learn to be who I am in Christ—I partake of the divine nature—God's desires and attitudes become mine, including His love and forgiveness towards others.

## **The big picture of Romans 6-8**

In Romans 7:7-25 Paul answers the third objection or question that his critics had concerning his teaching concerning *justification by faith* in 3:21-5:21. The first two questions were:

1. “Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? <sup>2</sup> Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2 NLT)
2. “Well then, since God’s grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! <sup>16</sup> Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.” (Romans 6:15-16 NLT)

Now Paul answers the third objection: “What then do we conclude? Is the Law identical with sin? Certainly not! Nevertheless, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have recognised sin or have known its meaning.” (Romans 7:7 AMP)

### **Outline**

1. Is the Law sin? (7:7a)
2. The Law is good: It’s a perfect moral X-ray machine to reveal sin, especially hidden sin (7:7b)
3. Sin is so sinful that it takes what is good and perfect and uses it for evil (7:8)
4. Living as an unbeliever before knowing the law (7:9)
5. Sin corrupts the law and defeats its purpose of giving life; once law is corrupted by sin, it brings death (7:10-12)
6. The purpose of the law is to reveal and highlight the sinfulness of sin (7:13)

## **The Law reveals the power and deceitfulness of sin (Romans 7:7-13)**

### **Romans 7:7-13 NKJV**

**What shall we say then? 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.” <sup>8</sup> But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. <sup>9</sup> I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. <sup>10</sup> And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. <sup>12</sup> Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**

**<sup>13</sup> Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.**

### **1. Is the Law sin?**

#### **Romans 7:7a NKJV**

**What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not!**

#### **Romans 7:7a NLT**

**Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not!**

Paul teaches that the law only causes us to want to sin more (7:8), and that, as believers, we don’t *have* to keep it anymore—we are dead to the law, no longer under its authority (7:1-6). This would cause some people to think that Paul was teaching that the law was sinful. Paul rejects this accusation and goes on to define the purpose of the law.

## 2. The Law is good: It's a perfect moral X-ray machine to reveal sin, especially hidden sin

Romans 7:7b NKJV

**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.”**

v 7 **I would not have known sin except through the law:** Imagine that you have an x-ray, and it reveals that you have cancer. Did the x-ray cause the cancer? No. The x-ray only revealed or exposed the hidden cancer. So to, the word of God reveals to us the true state of our hearts when we allow ourselves to be examined by it.

Hebrews 4:12 NLT

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Romans 3:20b NKJV

“By the Law is the knowledge of sin”

v 7 **For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”** It's a sad but true fact that the most serious sins are not the ones that we commit on the outside, but are actually ungodly attitudes of the heart. It's the hardening of the heart and the stubborn refusal to obey what we should do or be who we should be. Sin is always a problem of the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 NLT

“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? <sup>10</sup> But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.”

It's precisely because we can't see how sinful we really are, that God has given us a moral x-ray machine that reveals sin in us. If we choose to spend lots of time looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's word (James 1:22-25, 2 Corinthians 3:18), then we will slowly come to realise that what's inside of us is not pretty—**For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”** In fact, we will soon learn that there is *nothing* good inside of our old or sinful nature (v 18). Just imagine an x-ray that showed that every part of your body was diseased or sick. This is what the law reveals to us concerning our sinful nature or flesh. It's not news that we *want* to hear, but it is news that we *need* to hear. Why? Because it's only then that we realise that we need Jesus: firstly because we can't *save* ourselves, and secondly because we can't *change* ourselves.

v 7 **Covetousness:** “Note that Paul did not use murder, stealing, or adultery in his discussion; he uses *coveting*. This is the last of the Ten Commandments, and it differs from the other nine in that it is an inward attitude, not an outward action. Covetousness leads to the breaking of the other commandments! *It is an insidious sin that most people never recognize in their own lives, but God's Law reveals it.*” (Warren W. Wiersbe)

“What was Paul lusting [coveting] after? I suggest the object of Paul's desire was not the sensual type of sin we usually associate with lust. No, I believe Paul was lusting after prestige. He wanted to excel as a scholar—which seems a noble goal. Yet as he studied the law, I believe he saw that the underlying reason for his pursuit was a hunger for prominence.” (Jon Courson)

### **3. Sin is so sinful that it takes what is good and perfect and uses it for evil**

#### **Romans 7:8 NKJV**

**But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.**

#### **Romans 7:8 NLT**

**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.**

#### **Romans 7:8 AMP**

**But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment [to express itself], got a hold on me and aroused and stimulated all kinds of forbidden desires (lust, covetousness). For without the Law sin is dead [the sense of it is inactive and a lifeless thing].**

v 8 **But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire:** The law (commandment) says, “Don’t do that”, but what does the sinful nature hear? “Let’s do that!” It’s not the law that’s evil, but us. The sinful nature is so wicked and sinful that it is able to use something that is absolutely perfect for evil purposes.

**Because of our sinful nature, any boundary, instruction, or prohibition becomes something to rebel against**

The theologian Augustine in his book *Confessions* related how this worked in his own life as a young man: “There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it and carry our spoils away. We took off a huge load of pears—not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply in order to become a thief. The only feast I got was a feast of iniquity, and that I enjoyed to the full. What was it that I loved in the theft? Was it the pleasure of acting against the law? *The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing.*”

Wiersbe comments: “Something in human nature wants to rebel whenever a law is given. I was standing in Lincoln Park in Chicago, looking at the newly painted benches; and I noticed a sign on each bench: “Do Not Touch.” As I watched, I saw numbers of people deliberately reach out and touch the wet paint! Why? Because the sign told them not to! Instruct a child not to go near the water, and that is the very thing he will do! Why? “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

Believers who try to live by rules and regulations discover that their legalistic system only arouses more sin and creates more problems. The churches in Galatia were very legalistic, and they experienced all kinds of trouble. “But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another” (Galatians 5:15 NLT). **Their legalism did not make them more spiritual; it made them more sinful! Why? Because the Law arouses sin in our nature.**

v 8 **Opportunity**: “The word *opportunity* in the original is a military term meaning a base of operations. Prohibition furnishes a springboard from which sin is all too ready to take off.” (Harrison)

“A waterfront hotel in Florida was concerned that people might try to fish from the balconies so they put up signs saying, “NO FISHING FROM THE BALCONY.” They had constant problems with people fishing from the balconies, with lines and sinker weights breaking windows and bothering people in rooms below. They finally solved the problem by simply taking down the signs—and no one thought to fish from the balconies. *Because of our fallen nature, the law can actually work like an invitation to sin.*” (David Guzik)

v 8 “**Apart from the law, sin was dead**” (NKJV), “**If there were no law, sin would not have that power**” (NLT): The sinful nature is always at enmity (war) with God, meaning that it only wants to do the exact opposite of what God wants. Therefore, if there’s no law or prohibition for the sinful nature to rebel against, then the sinful nature is dead in the sense that it can’t do anything, it is inactive or lifeless.

#### **4. Living as an unbeliever before knowing the law**

Romans 7:9 NKJV

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Romans 7:9 NLT

At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, and I died.

Romans 7:9 AMP

Once I was alive, but quite apart from and unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came, sin lived again and I died (was sentenced by the Law to death). [Psalm 73:22]

v 9 **I was alive once without the law**: Imagine that I am happily travelling at 110 km/hr along a road. I’ve been texting on my phone the whole time, so I don’t know what the speed limit is. I feel free to go as fast as I want to. I glance up from my phone and suddenly slam on the brakes as a blind child walks right in front of my car. I put my phone down and realise that it’s a 10km/hr zone outside a school for the blind. A policeman asks me to step out of my car and put my hands behind my back. I suddenly realise that I’ve made a terrible mistake that will cost me dearly as I am taken off to prison. Now that the law has caught up with me, I no longer feel free or alive, but rather condemned—**but when the commandment came, ... I died.**

The point of the story is that until we know what is right or wrong, we do whatever we want and don’t feel any guilt or condemnation—we are “**alive**”. But once the law shows us that we are doing the wrong thing, then we are no longer alive, but rather “dead” or condemned.

The rich young ruler in mark 10:17-27 is a good example of how Jesus used the law to reveal to the young man just how sinful or covetous he was. Jesus let the law do its job—it condemned the young man and “killed him”. He went away sad, but for the first time in his life, he really understood just why he needed a Saviour.

“He is not alive with the life that the New Testament writers so often speak about. He is alive in the sense that he has never been put to death as a result of confrontation with the law.” (Morris)

“He was quite secure amid all his sin and sinfulness. He lived in the sense that the deathblow had not yet killed him. He sat secure in the house of his ignorance like a man living on a volcano and thought that all was well.” (Lenski)

v 9 **But when the commandment came, sin revived:** As mentioned previously, sin only shows itself when there is a law to break. Not only am I condemned (**and I died**), but I also come to have a strong urge or desire to continue in that sin (**sin revived**).

“When we do come to know the law, the law shows us our guilt and it excites our rebellion, bringing forth more sin and death.” (David Guzik)

v 9 **I was alive once:** This is Paul’s testimony. Paul describes how he was before he was saved in Galatians 1 and Philippians 3:1-11. He was a pharisee who studied the law. He felt good about himself as he kept the outward form of the law. However, once he came across the 10th commandment, “do no covet”, then he realised that he could never be good enough (**I died**). Also, understanding that he should never covet only made him want to covet more (**sin revived** or came alive).

## **5. Sin corrupts the law and defeats its purpose of giving life; once law is corrupted by sin, it brings death**

### **Romans 7:10-12 NKJV**

**And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. <sup>12</sup> Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**

### **Romans 7:10-12 NLT**

**So I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. <sup>11</sup> Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. <sup>12</sup> But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.**

v 10 **And the commandment:** Jesus summed up the entire law in two commands. “*Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. <sup>30</sup> And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these”* (Mark 12:29-31 NLT).

v 10 **Which was to bring life:** Indeed, the law does promise life, *if* you keep it perfectly.

v 10 **I found to bring death:** Why? We are all born with a sinful nature (see Romans 5:19) which both hates God, and is completely selfish. Therefore, it is impossible for us to keep the law—we can’t love God and we can’t love others as we do ourselves. Therefore, the law only condemns us.

v 11 **For sin, ... deceived me, and by it killed me:** It's important to understand that first and foremost, sin is deceptive. How does sin deceive us?

- Sin promises satisfaction, but only leaves us empty.
- Sin makes us think that we can justify ourselves, but really we are only fooling ourselves.
- Sin makes us think that there will be no negative consequences. However, all sin of all unbelievers will be punished in the end (see Revelation 20:11-15). Also, all sin of both believers and unbelievers produces death now—*These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death* (James 1:15 NLT).
- Sin makes us think that God is holding something good back from us, that we are missing out of something fun, pleasurable, and satisfying, that God is the boring fun quencher. However, the reason that God warns us away from sin is because it will kill us.

v 11 **For sin ... deceived me:** “It isn't the law that deceives us, but it is sin that uses the law as an occasion for rebellion. This is why Jesus said, *you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free* (John 8:32). The truth makes us free from the deceptions of sin.” (David Guzik) This is why we must be daily in the word for ourselves. If not, we *will* be deceived.

v 12 **Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good:** Just because sin uses God's perfect law for an evil purpose, it doesn't mean that the law is sinful or evil. The problem is in us. It's like an anaesthetic used properly promotes healing, but given in excessive quantities, it becomes a lethal injection.

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*Application: The law kills—the danger of legalism in a person or a church*

Wiersbe comments: “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law” (Gal. 3:21b NKJV). But the Law cannot give life: it can only show the sinner that he is guilty and condemned. This explains why legalistic Christians and churches do not grow and bear spiritual fruit. They are living by Law, and the Law always kills. Few things are more dead than an orthodox church that is proud of its “high standards” and tries to live up to them in its own energy. Often the members of such a church start to judge and condemn one another, and the sad result is a church fight and then a church split that leaves members—or former members—angry and bitter.

As the new Christian grows, he comes into contact with various philosophies of the Christian life. He can read books, attend seminars, listen to tapes, and get a great deal of information. If he is not careful, he will start following a human leader and accept his teachings as Law. This practice is a very subtle form of legalism, and it kills spiritual growth. No human teacher can take the place of Christ; no book can take the place of the Bible. Men can give us information, but only the Spirit can give us illumination and help us understand spiritual truths. The Spirit enlightens us and enables us; no human leader can do that.”

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## **6. The purpose of the law is to reveal and highlight the sinfulness of sin (v 13)**

### **Romans 7:13 NKJV**

**Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.**

### **Romans 7:13 NLT**

**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.**

### **Romans 7:13 AMP**

**Did that which is good then prove fatal [bringing death] to me? Certainly not! It was sin, working death in me by using this good thing [as a weapon], in order that through the commandment sin might be shown up clearly to be sin, that the extreme malignity [evilness] and immeasurable sinfulness of sin might plainly appear.**

v 13 **Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not!**: Again, the law is good and perfect. It's not the law's fault that we are condemned, we are condemned because we are sinners.

v 13 **But sin, ... was producing death in me through what is good**: Again, sin uses the law to produce all kinds of evil desires in us. Where God says, "Don't do that", our sinful nature says, "I must do that". This only serves to highlight just how wicked, evil and depraved our sinful nature is.

### **Understanding the true nature of sin**

v 13 **So that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful**: "Sin "becomes more sinful" in light of the law in two ways. First, sin becomes **exceedingly sinful** in contrast to the law. Second, sin becomes **exceedingly sinful** because the law provokes its evil nature." (David Guzik)

"Instead of being a dynamo that gives us power to overcome, the Law is a magnet that draws out of us all kinds of sin and corruption." (Wiersbe)

v 13 **Exceedingly sinful**: "Why didn't he say, 'exceedingly black,' or 'exceedingly horrible,' or 'exceedingly deadly'? Why, because there is nothing in the world so bad as sin. When he wanted to use the very worst word he could find to call sin by, he called it by its own name, and reiterated it: 'sin,' 'exceedingly sinful.'" (Spurgeon)

"Unsaved people know that there is such a thing as sin; but they do not realize the sinfulness of sin. Many Christians do not realize the true nature of sin. We excuse our sins with words like "mistakes" or "weaknesses"; but God condemns our sins and tries to get us to see that they are "exceedingly sinful." Until we realize how wicked sin really is, we will never want to oppose it and live in victory." (Wiersbe)



## A warning concerning the deceitfulness of sin

v 13 **Sin, that it might appear sin:** This should be a wake up call to us all. Hello! Yes, sin is deceitful, and yes, it hides in our hearts. *It's not a matter of, "Is there any sin in my heart? But rather, "Do I recognise which desires are sinful and which are not?"*

"The *law*, therefore, is the grand instrument in the hands of a faithful minister, to alarm and awaken sinners." (Clarke)

If we don't take a good hard look at ourselves in the mirror of the word each day, having an attitude of humility and faith, then we will not see that sin is sin—we will not know that many of our motives are sinful, and we will not know just how strong and established those sinful desires are. Therefore we will continue to live more and more by the desires of the sinful nature, and day by day find it easier and easier to justify our sinful behaviour, growing more and more blind to the dark reality of the condition of our hearts.

In the Old Testament, sin is characterised by leprosy. Leprosy causes the nerve cells to die first, making the person's skin numb, and therefore easily damaged as they can't feel pain. The person with a proud attitude will either not read the word, or, if they do read it, will be blind to its message and not apply it. Their hearts will continue to become harder and harder, resulting in them finding it easier and easier to justify their sinful attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, because of their spiritual leprosy, they become numb or desensitised to the destructive effects of their sin, both to themselves, and to others—they can't see that their sin is destroying both themselves and those around them. Remember that sin like leprosy spreads easily.

"This is one of the most deplorable results of sin. It injures us most by taking from us the capacity to know how much we are injured. It undermines the man's constitution, and yet leads him to boast of unfailing health; it beggars him, and tells him he is rich; it strips him, and makes him glory in his fancied robes." (Spurgeon)

Jesus said to the last days church, the church of Laodicea, *"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! <sup>16</sup> But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! <sup>17</sup> You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. <sup>18</sup> So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. <sup>19</sup> I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference [be zealous and repent].*

<sup>20</sup> *"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." (Revelation 3:15-20 NLT)*

Jesus Himself has told us that the last days church, the Laodicean church, will be characterised by many unrepentant believers. These are people who have not been willing to repent of their sin (die to self) when confronted by the word, and have therefore chosen to be deceived by sin, and so are out of fellowship with God. They pridefully declare that they are living godly lives in fellowship with God, but the opposite is the truth.

## Summary and conclusion

### 1. Is the Law sin? (7:7a)

*No it is not. It is good and perfect and holy.*

### 2. The Law is good: It's a perfect moral X-ray machine to reveal sin, especially hidden sin (7:7b)

*Let God be true, and every man a liar—if what I believe doesn't agree with the Scriptures, then it's not the Scriptures that are wrong, but rather me. I'm deceived.*

*Romans 3:4 AMP*

*Let God be found true though every human being is false and a liar, as it is written, That You may be justified and shown to be upright in what You say, and prevail when You are judged [by sinful men]. [Psalm 51:4.]*

### 3. Sin is so sinful that it takes what is good and perfect and uses it for evil (7:8)

*The law says, "Don't do that", but what does the sinful nature hear? "Let's do that!"*

### 4. Living as an unbeliever before knowing the law (7:9)

*The unbeliever is "alive" until the law condemns them, and they die. Example, the rich young ruler who went away sad after Jesus used to law to reveal how desperately wicked his heart was, even though he led an outwardly moral life. The same was true for Paul.*

### 5. Sin corrupts the law and defeats its purpose of giving life; once law is corrupted by sin, it brings death (7:10-12)

*"Legalistic Christians and churches do not grow and bear spiritual fruit. They are living by Law, and the Law always kills" (Wiersbe)*

### 6. The purpose of the law is to reveal and highlight the sinfulness of sin (7:13)

*Truly, we would never know just how wretched and wicked sin really is without the law to reveal it to us. The question we must all ask and the conclusion we must all come to is very simple: "What is the problem? The problem is me." Remember, the moment I try to justify myself, I am deceiving myself.*