“The Beauty of the Law Vs The Ugliness of Sin”

July 29, 2018

Deuteronomy 5:6-21

Please find with me the seventh chapter of Romans.

How many of you have ever gone the wrong direction? Once when we were traveling on Route 84 west, our family took an exit and stopped for a meal. We then got back on Route 84. But, after an hour or so, we realized we were traveling on 84 east. Needless to say, it was a mistake; but nothing as large as this one.

The story is told of Admiral Robert Peary, the man credited with being the first person to reach the North Pole in the Arctic Circle. The following story is told about Peary, his friend James Davis, and their crew who, in 1909, were attempting to map a section of the Arctic Circle.

“On one particular expedition, Peary and his crew were preparing to hike to another unfamiliar location. On the eve of their departure, they studied the stars and determined their exact coordinates. As the sun rose, they began an arduous, lengthy journey north to this unmapped region. They marched through the ice and snow all day long with the freezing air burning their lungs.

As the sun set, they made camp, totally exhausted from their trip. After their evening meal, Perry studied the stars again to determine their exact coordinates. He was stunned to learn that even though he and his crew had journeyed north all day, they were now farther south than when they began that morning. After struggling to solve this problem, they discovered that although they had traveled north, they were on a giant ice sheet that was floating south faster than they were walking north. Although they were going in the right direction, they had slid further and further away and didn’t even know it.” [Found on <https://illustration-exchange.com> by William R. "Bill" Bright (1921 –2003), an American evangelist and the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ].

The reason I tell that story is this. Many, many people might just be doing the exact same thing. Spiritually speak-ing, good works, doing good deeds, doing things *for* God, keeping the Ten Commandments, and “trying to please God” can be compared to Admiral Peary’s attempt to travel north on the Arctic Circle only to find that they are traveling south.

Now, when you read the Bible, you often find that the Bible deals with some very large subjects. But you also find this. Whether the subject is science or psychology or history, astronomy or even mathematics, the Bible is always correct.

Two of the largest topics that I’ve ever read about are found right here in Roman seven. And, yes, I’ll admit it. They are topics that most of us might prefer to leave alone.

They are these: man’s sin and God’s Law

And here’s what one man wrote this about the two topics of sin and the Law. *“Our innate self-righteousness is so entrenched that until the law strips us of it and convicts us of our sin, we will not cast ourselves totally upon Christ. Our culture adds to this by telling us that we’re not sinners. We’re not worms, for goodness sake! We’re pretty good folks.*

*We may want to bring Jesus into our lives as a useful coach or helper in our self-improvement program. But to trust Him as our Savior, we have to see the depth of our sin as God’s law exposes it for what it is.”* “*God gave His law to convict us of our sin and bring us to the end of ourselves so that we would flee to Christ for salvation.”* [Found on www. <https://bible.org> “Why God Gave The Law” by Pastor Steven J. Cole].

So, no, it’s not easy to listen to a sermon on the subject of sin. But when you add the topic of the Law, the difficulty is compounded. Yet, if God is True, and He is, and if His Word is True, and it is, then we must set your own prefer-ences aside and ask the LORD to speak to your heart.

This entire Book of Romans is a “law” book. Just in this little section alone, you find the “law’ sixteen times. Romans, remember, clarifies God’s purpose in giving us the Law. And this seventh chapter shows us “The Beauty of the Law Vs The Ugliness of Sin.” Shall we pray?

Let me begin with Jesus. What did *He* say about the Law?

Matthew 5:17 *“Think not that I am come to destroy* ***the law****, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from* ***the law****, till all be fulfilled.*

*(19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least* ***com-mandments****, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

*(20) For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*

It is always right to do everything God says. And it’s always wrong to break even the smallest of the LORD’s commands. But, simply put, all of us have broken God’s commands. Yet, here’s what we find in the NT. The Scribes and Pharisees were teaching this. “Man must keep all the commands to be saved.”

Folks, you can’t believe everything every “Bible teacher” teaches, including the NT Jewish Bible teachers we know as the Pharisees. Now, according to Jesus, the Scribes and the Pharisees had two primary faults. They were hypocritical and they were wrong. You cannot enter the gates of Heaven by keeping the Law.

Now, I admit, the Law is a huge topic. But, it is extremely important. So, I hope to break it down into small pieces.

And, how did the Apostle Paul, a converted Jew, see the Law? Romans 10:1 *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record [I bear them this witness] that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

*(3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”*

Let me say a word here on the line “the end of the law.” At the moment you receive Christ as your personal Savior and LORD, the Law has done its work. The word “end” means “end.” It’s over. If you’ve been trying your dead level best to obey God, to obey His commands, to quote “keep the Law,” and you now realize that Christ is the Only One Who could and did quote “keep the whole Law,” then for you the end of the Law has come.

Here’s how Paul saw his own people, the Jews. And he makes it as simple as he can. To become righteous before God, you must believe on Christ alone because Christ is the end of the Law.

Now, look with me at the big picture of this seventh chapter of Romans. Here’s what it looks like.

First, Romans 7:1-3 The institution of marriage illustrates the power and dominion of the Law?

Second, Romans 7:4-6 The Christian dead to the Law.

Third, Romans 7:7-12 If the Law gives us so much difficulty in the matter of sin, then why did God gave us the Law?

And fourth, Romans 7:13-25 “If I do what I shouldn’t do, doesn’t that mean I’m still under the Law?”

It’s this third section of Romans seven that I want to say a word about today.

The Apostle Paul is, in my opinion, the greatest Christian the Church has ever seen. And, even though Paul had never been to the city of Rome, there was a Roman Church there. And the Book of Romans is Paul’s explanation of true Christianity. And, without a knowledge of the Law, there can be no true Christian. And why? Because through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. Here’s a passage from chapter three.

Romans 3:20 *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified [made right] in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

You see, you can’t bypass the Law because it’s so natural to think so very highly of yourself; so highly, in fact, some have been taught to think that if we can *do* enough good deeds, God will receive us into Heaven when we die. Nearly every religion on the earth is a “work-based” religion on which people are hoping that God will save then when they die.

But, just like Peary and his friend James Davis in 1909, all the effort in the world at trying to be good and do good won’t get you to God. Why? Because you are traveling in the wrong direction.

And, since we’ve already taken a look at Paul’s illustration of marriage on the matter of the power of the Law and since we’ve already heard him say that the Christian is dead to the Law, then we need to ask the following question, *“If the Law gives us so much difficulty in the matter of sin, then why did God gave us the Law?”*

Would you please follow in your Bible as I read from Romans 7:7 *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

*(8) But sin, taking occasion [opportunity] by the commandment, wrought [worked] in me all manner of concupiscence [coveting]. For without [apart from] the law sin was dead. (9) For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

*(10) And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. (11) For sin, taking occasion [opportunity] by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. (12) Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”*

Just two or three things on the matter of the Law.

First, the beauty of the Law, verse seven.

Second, the mischievous use of the Law, verses eight thru eleven.

And third, the Law always has been and always will be good.

Everything in the universe has its God-given purpose. The purpose of the Law, what is that? Why is the reason for the Law? According to the LORD Himself, the Law points out what is sin and what is not sin. And that, folks, really is a good things. Romans 7:7 *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid [May God never allow this to happen]. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”*

Paul give us one command here as an example. It’s the last of the Ten Commandments. Its’ the one that says *“thou shalt not covet.”*

Now, what happens in the heart of man when we read or hear God saying “You shall not covet”? Here’s what happens. We covet.

Do you see what the Law does? It defines sin and then, as you read and hear it read, it convicts you of that sin. Covet-ing is one of a multitude of “heart sins;” those sins that only you and God know about. Coveting is the total opposite of contentment. When you covet, you’re telling yourself that you are discontent with what God has given you. And, at the same time, you are desiring something that God says is off limits to you. It even means to take delight in something that God says is wrong for you. If I take delight in my wife, that’s good. But, if I delight in your wife, that’s not good. Here’s Jesus again. Luke 12:15 *“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”*

We wouldn’t know the sin of coveting, except for the Law. That’s the beauty of the Law. Psalm 19:7 *“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul…”* Psalm 119:43 *“…thy commandments are my delights.”* You see, the Law comes from the Law-giver. It comes from the heart of a Perfect, loving Law-giver.

Yet, by nature, whenever we see or hear the Law, we recoil. We’ve *really* prefer that God not tell us what we can or can’t have. But, the Law itself is a thing of beauty because it comes from the Most Beautiful Heart in existence, God’s heart. But, what’s really interesting is this. No government on earth has designed a law against coveting.

You can compare God’s Law to a beautiful painting. What do you see? You see the beauty in the scene. You see the detail in the faces. You see the point the artist is attempt-ing to make. Yet, do you know the laws the artist has had to follow to achieve that scene? Do you know the discipline it takes to paint it?

The beauty in the Law is that it’s God’s heart pointing out to you the things that are pleasing to Him.

First, the beauty of the Law.

Second, the mischievous use of the Law, verse eight.

Romans 7:8 *“But sin, taking occasion [opportunity] by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [covetous-ness]. For without the law sin was dead. (9) For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

*(10) And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. (11) For sin, taking occasion [opportunity] by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”*

Someone has rightly said that the Law might be compared to a warning sign; even a “Danger” sign. But, it’s our indwelling sin that produces the sin, not the Law.

You see, there’s nothing wrong with God’s Law; but there is something wrong within your heart and my heart. God says *“Thou shalt not covet.”* And that wrong within us, that sin nature, makes us want all sorts of things God says “no” to. Romans 7:8 *“But sin, taking occasion [opportunity] by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [covetousness].”*

The problem is not the Law. The problem is us. The problem is that we, you and I, are Law-breakers. The problem is the heart.

Now, consider this with me regarding one more expression of the beauty of God’s Law. Whenever a State Supreme Court makes it a Law to not allow the Ten Com-mandments to be posted in a State Courtroom or a State Classroom, the beauty of the Law is blemished as well. You see, according to the Bible, when you love your neighbor, we fulfill the Law. Now, who here thinks you have any true sense of loving your neighbors since the Ten Command-ments can hardly be found today in our Public arena? You see, the Law is not something evil or something we need to get rid of. We need God’s Law even if our hearts don’t want to adhere to it.

Our hearts, folks, by nature and by habit, are sinful hearts. And our sinful hearts mischievously misuse the Law. Our own hearts deceive us. Romans 7:11*“For sin, taking occasion [opportunity] by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”*

When the LORD says no, our hearts say yes. God says yes and our hearts say no. It’s our indwelling sin that produces the sin, not the Law. So, do you see what the Law does? It reveals sin in your heart.

First, the beauty of the Law; beautiful because it comes from a beautiful heart.

Second, the mischievous use of the Law; mischievous because it elicits an improper response from a sinful heart.

Third, the Law is good, verse twelve.

Romans 7:12*“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”*

How many of you know some things that are holy, just, and good? Very few.

But how many things do you know that are unholy, unjust, and not good? Quite a few.

Folks, our sin, our sins are ugly; so ugly, in fact, that it took the Cross of Christ to ultimately deal with them.

But, in the end, it is the Law of God that is good. And the reason is simple. God is Good. God is Holy. And God is Just. Society might tell us that a particular sin is OK or that sin is good. It might even tell us God’s Law is not good and that we do not need it in our schools or courthouses or, God, forbid, in our Churches. But the total opposite is true. God’s law is exactly what every society on earth needs.

Don’t forget the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:17 *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”*

In closing, listen with me to the words of King David on the matter of God’s Law.

Psalm 119:89 *“Forever, O Lord,* ***thy word*** *is settled in heaven. (90)**Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. (91) They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants. (92) Unless* ***thy law*** *had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

*(93) I will never forget* ***thy precepts [rules]****: for with them thou hast quickened me. (94) I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy* ***precepts [rules]****. (95) The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies. (96) I have seen an end of all perfection: but* ***thy commandment*** *is exceeding broad.*

*(97) O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. (98) Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. (99) I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.*

 *(100) I understand more than the ancients, because I keep* ***thy precepts [rules]****. (101) I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep* ***thy word****. (102)* *I have not departed from* ***thy judgments****: for thou hast taught me. (103) How sweet are* ***thy words*** *unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

*(104) Through* ***thy precepts [rules]*** *I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. (105)* ***Thy word*** *is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

You see, “God’s Law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good.”

So, so what!

Now, I know that the Law is beautiful and that sin is ugly. And I now know that the Law is holy and just and good. So what!

Well, two things.

One, The Law reveals God’s heart. So, let your heart and mind be persuaded by these passages to love God’s Law as much as you love Him. You see, when you love Him, you love all that comes out of His heart.

And two, God wants us to see just how much we need Him. So, if His purpose in the Law is to reveal the sins of your heart, let the Law do its work because when you see yourself as you really are, a sinner in the eyes of a Holy God, and then you see that the Holy God of Heaven sent His Son into this world to both forgive and to remove those sins, your heart has only one response worthy of both the Law and God – honor and appreciation.

The One Who could and did keep all the Law is the One Who loves you more than all the world’s people could love you. He loves you more deeply than any person on earth ever loved you. And He gave you His Son, the LORD Jesus, to come here to the world to die as the Substitute for your sins; all of them; all the external ones and all the internal ones.

And three, you are what you think. Think on the things God says and believe everything He says. And when and if you sin, bring yourself immediately to the LORD and confess that sin and let the LORD cleanse you.

So, are your right now believing on Him, on the work He did on your behalf on the Cross? That’s what life is all about. And folks, that’s one of the greatest wonders of knowing God through Christ.

Shall we pray?

Will you let Him have His way today?

Hymn # 147 “How Great Thou Art”