

## THE LAW



One key to understanding St. Paul's epistle to the Romans is to distinguishing properly between the several ways Paul uses the word "law" in this epistle.

1. **The Mosaic Law** (Rom 2:12, 13) was written by God on tablets of stone (2 Cor. 3:3, 7) and given to the Jews through Moses. **This Law reveals God's righteousness to prepare men for the Messiah and for God's grace.** When Paul speaks of "the law" he is most often referring to the Mosaic Law.

**The Law is good**, but cannot be kept. It is revelation from God, but **it is not an end in itself.**

**The purpose of the Mosaic Law is:**

- (a) To reveal the difference between good and evil.
- (b) To make the world accountable to God (Rom. 3:19).
- (c) To manifest sin (Rom. 3:20).
- (d) To be a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

Though it is not opposed to the grace of God, the Law cannot save us or make us righteous.

2. **The natural law** (Rom. 2:14, 15) has been "written" by God in the heart of every human who has ever lived as **the voice of conscience.** It is a **reliable guide to God's righteousness for those who are pure in heart;** but it can be dulled or obscured completely by habitual sin.

3. **The law of works** (Rom. 3:27) is our attempt to establish righteousness before God on the basis of keeping the natural law and/or the Mosaic Law. This law reveals human weakness and sin.

4. **The law of faith** (Rom. 3:27) is the synergy, the cooperation, of our faithfulness with God's. **It alone is the means by which we attain the righteousness of God.** God has been revealing His righteousness by this law little by little since the time of Creation, but now has revealed it fully in Christ. As **both the natural law and the Mosaic Law bear witness to the law of faith,** so those who become righteous by grace through faith fulfill in Christ both the natural and the Mosaic Law.

5. **The law of sin** (Rom. 7:25; 8:2) is **the power of the sinful passions in our mortal humanity.** **Passions-desires for such things as food, sex, praise, possessions-are natural; their sinful over-indulgence is not.** Carnal (physical) passions are especially strong. They aid the unnatural domination of the body over the soul. Sometimes carnal passions overpower the will. **The law of sin coupled with the Mosaic Law breeds intense warfare between sin and righteousness.** Only God's grace can bring victory for righteousness.

6. **The law of the Spirit** (Rom. 8:2) is also called "*the law of Christ*" (Gal. 6:2) and "*the law of liberty*" (James 1:25; 2:12). It is **the power and life of the Holy Spirit active in those who by faith in Christ live out their baptism and chrismation to the fullest possible degree.** This makes the righteousness of God gained by faith real in one's life. **Coupled with the law of faith, the law of the Spirit defeats the law of sin** and fulfills the natural and Mosaic Law. It orients one's innermost being toward God and **restores the power of the spirit over the flesh, the soul over the body.**

- Orthodox Study Bible, page 1525