

JCI #162 What the Law Couldn't Do July 2015

Romans 8:3-9

For what the Law could not do...God did!

Let's turn our attention once more to the Grand Central Station of Gospel Truth: Romans Chapter 8.

One of the most stunning statements of Romans 8 is found in verse 3: "What the law could not do..."

This, from a former Pharisee who had depended on the law for his salvation for his entire life!

The radical realization for him was that there was something the law could not do.

Before we focus on what the law cannot do, let's review what the law can do and does do, perfectly. In

Romans we have a summary on what the law can do and what it cannot do; what it was designed for and what it wasn't designed for.

THE LAW CAN SHOW ME WHAT SIN IS Romans 3:20

First of all, the law reveals right from wrong. It shows me what sin is. And it does it perfectly.

"For by the law is the knowledge of sin..." Romans 3:20

"I would not have known what sin was except through the law..." Romans 7:7

THE LAW CAN SHOW ME THAT I AM A SINNER Romans 3:19-20

God gave Moses the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 12. It is evident that the law came from the very finger of God. Therefore, the law is good. Paul agrees with this in 1 Tim 1:8 (The law is good) and Romans 7:12 (The law is holy..., righteous and good.) Let us not think that the law is the problem. The law is not the problem. Lawbreaking is the problem. The man who is content to drive within the speed limit has no problem with the law. It is the man who is determined to break the speed limit who is constantly watching in fear lest the law-enforcer should show up. He naturally thinks the law is the problem or the cop is the problem! But the problem is to be found in himself, the law breaker. The Law was given to bear witness to me that I am indeed a lawbreaker and accountable for my sin.

Romans 3:19-20 “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”

1 Tim 1:8-9

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels...!

Paul summarizes this aspect of the Law’s purpose in his declaration in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.”

THE LAW CAN CONDEMN ME (Romans 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death...”

The Law shows me what sin is. The Law shows me that I am guilty of sin. The Law pronounces the death sentence on me as a law-breaker. “The soul that sins shall die...” Ezekiel 18:20

Having seen what the Law can and does do, we are ready to consider what the Law cannot do.

The law *can* show me what sin is, but *cannot* remove it.

The law *can* show me I am a sinner, but *cannot* forgive me.

The law *can* condemn me, but *cannot* save me.

Standing under the just weight of divine wrath, now we are ready for the Good News. This was the whole purpose of the Law. The Law was given to show me my wretchedness to prepare me for amazing grace!

Galatians 3:24 “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ....

Romans 7:12-13 “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But *in order that sin might be recognized as sin*, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.” Romans 7:24 “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

Paul had come to realize

that God sent us His law
to show us how desperately
we needed Him
to send us His Son.

“For what the Law cannot do, God did by sending His Son... as a sin offering...”

The Law revealed sin, Christ removed it!
The Law required death, Christ took it!
The Law pronounced judgment, Christ bore it!
The Law demanded satisfaction, Christ satisfied it!

The second part of the application of this glorious gospel is that God then sent His Spirit to apply to sinners the work of His Son. For Paul moves on in Romans 8:6-11 to declare that the problem is beyond just what I have done (sinned); the problem is what I am, an incorrigible rebel! *The problem is that I do what I do because I am what I am.* God sent His Son to care for what I have done, and then sent His Spirit to care for what I am.

Romans 8:6-10 (excerpts)

The mind of sinful man is death...

the sinful mind is hostile to God... it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so...

those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God ...

and if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ

God's Son by His death removed my sin debt.

My sin is removed and righteousness is imputed.

God's Spirit by a new birth imparts a new nature.

My rebellion is removed and submission is imparted.

What the Law could not do, God did by sending His Son to die for me!

What I could not do, God did by sending His Spirit to live in me!

“To God be the glory.... Great things He has done!”

Self Check

1. Have you ever looked to your obedience to the law as the basis of your acceptance with God?
2. Do you have the tendency still to rely on self-righteousness rather than Christ's righteousness?
3. What are some evidences of slipping back into the “self-righteous” mode of Pharisaism?

For Further Study

Follow Paul's instruction in a correlative passage, Phil 3:4-14, as he moves from self-righteousness to Christ-righteousness. Note the marked changes from the before to the after in his coming to faith in Christ!

“Lord, forgive me for ever relying on my own merit for anything. You know how often the plague of Pharisaism renews its feverish work in my soul. There is no righteousness apart from Christ's that saves me, and no work save by Your Spirit that can change me. Salvation is of the Lord! Jonah exclaimed it from the whale's belly yet quickly moved back to the plague of pride and anger against the people of Nineveh. Grant me a heart that fully acknowledges my own sinfulness, fully relies on Christ for righteousness, on Your Spirit for power, and that breaks over the lost around me who are as blind and bound as once I was. Grant me a bold and loving witness for Christ this week, I pray in the name of Christ My Righteousness, AMEN.”

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4

Ron& Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable,
changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible
with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity,
owning nothing yet possessing everything
that matters and lasts.
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.
Welcome to THE JOURNEY