

“I Would Not Have Known What Sin Was”

Sermons on Romans # 16

Texts: Romans 7:7-13; Isaiah 6:1-7

When Paul tells us in Romans 6:14 that we are no longer under law but under grace, he’s referring to the fact that now that we are in Christ (and, therefore, under grace), the law no longer condemns us. In Romans 7:1-6, Paul continues to discuss this, reminding us that apart from Christ, the law held us captive and aroused our sinful passions so that we bore fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, because we died with Christ. In Romans 7:7-13, Paul continues his discussion of the Christian’s relationship to the law. The law of God is holy, and the commandments are holy, righteous, and good. And yet that same law arouses the desire within us to sin. Why is that? How did that which is good become death to us? As Paul will tell us, God gave us the law to show us that our sin is utterly sinful. We would not know what sin was, Paul says, were it not for the commandments of God.

We are working our way through Romans chapters 6-8 and looking at Paul’s doctrine of sanctification. Building upon the distinction he set forth in Romans 5:12-21 between the damage wrought by Adam and the superabounding grace of Jesus Christ, Paul makes the point that all those in Jesus Christ have died with Christ and will rise to newness of life. Having set forth Christ’s death, burial and resurrection as pattern for our own sanctification, Paul began this discussion *not* with a list of things we should do or avoid, but by reminding us that sanctification begins with the recognition that we have died with Christ, we have been buried with Christ, and that we have been raised with Christ. And having been reminded of this, Paul asks, “how then, can we continue to live as slaves to sin, offering ourselves as instruments of unrighteousness?” Rather, the apostle’s point is that having been set free from sin and its condemnation, we are now free for the first time to offer ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness.

But since Paul has been focusing on the indicative (what we are in Christ), at some point Paul must deal with the single most divisive issue in the apostolic church, namely, the Christian’s relationship to the law. If God reckons us as righteous through faith alone and not through works, why then does the law—which is the revelation of the will of God—only bring condemnation and death, when the commandments of God are holy, righteous and good? As Paul will make clear, there is nothing wrong with the law. The problem is that we are sinful!

Since there is so much here that we need to consider let us get right to our text, Romans 7:7-13.

Throughout the Book of Romans, whenever Paul makes an important theological point, he deals with possible objections from his readers by asking rhetorical questions. In verse 7 he asks another: “*What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not!*” With this question, Paul gets right to the heart of the issue, the role of the law in the life of a Christian, especially given the possibility that because of its effects upon sinners (sin, condemnation, death) some might mistakenly regard the law as sinful in itself. That Paul raises the question, challenges the way Jewish Christians in Rome would have understood the law. “How can it be that what God meant for good (the law) brings such havoc upon the human race?”

Paul has already said several striking things about the law, so much so that some of his readers/hearers may have thought the apostle regarded the law as an evil thing. In Romans 5:20, Paul wrote: “*The law*

was added so that trespasses might increase.” In Romans 6:14 he has said, “*sin shall not be your master because you are not under law but under grace*”.¹ So Paul now asks the question “*is the law sin?*” to deal with this very point. Once again Paul answers his own question with the emphatic negative, “*No way!*” Paul will explain that the law is not sinful, but the law does expose how sinful we are. In fact, preaching the law to sinners is like throwing gasoline on hot embers. The law will do its work.

In verse 7 Paul says, “*Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law.*” The problem is not with the law. The problem is with us! A qualification is in order. “Paul does not mean that people without the law do not know sin at all; he has just said the opposite (2:14-15; 5:12-14). All people have some idea of right and wrong; a moral code of some sort is almost universal. People who do not have the law may well know that they have done wrong. But people without God’s law do not see wrongdoing as it really is, as sin against God. There is a great difference between the breaching of a human moral code and sin, that evil thing which God forbids. It takes the law to show wrongdoing to be sin. And to see my misdeeds as sin against God inevitably means that I am troubled and begin to see my need of a savior. There is a healing function in the law’s work of convicting the sinner.”² As Paul puts it in Galatians 3:24: “*So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*”

This is important in several regards. The law is written upon the hearts of all men and women without exception (by virtue of creation and the covenant of works) and is codified in the written law (the Mosaic covenant). This is why the preaching of the law resonates with people since the law puts into words what everybody already knows to be true. In one sense, then, people do know what sin is apart from the law, so that cannot be Paul’s point here. Paul’s point *is* that since the law is written upon the heart, when the law is proclaimed the sin which lies hidden within us is now brought to life. The written law moves the hearer from the subjective (I feel this might be wrong) to the objective (God says this is wrong). One who hears the law proclaimed no longer simply feels guilty. They now know they have sinned against God.³ As Calvin reminds us, the point is that “sin dwells in us, and not in the law. Its cause is the corrupt desire of our flesh, and we come to know it by our knowledge of the righteousness of God which is declared to us in the law. . . . Without the law we are either too dull to discern our own depravity, or else we are made entirely devoid of sense through self-flattery.”⁴ The law exposes what we are by nature and by choice—sinners. The law jolts us back to reality. It shows us how God sees us.

Again, we are reminded of the serious consequences of preaching the law. The law excites us to sin all the more. The law exposes our sinfulness. The law brings guilt, condemnation and death upon the sinner without any relief. To preach the law without the gospel (legalism), is to leave people without hope and

¹ Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 278.

² Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 278.

³ Cranfield puts it like this. “While men do actually sin in the absence of the law, they do not fully recognize sin for what it is, apart from the law (Romans 3:20—‘rather through the law we become conscious of sin’), and that, while they do indeed experience covetousness even though they do not know the tenth commandment, it is only in the light of that commandment that they recognize their coveting for what it is—that coveting which God forbids, a deliberate disobeying of God’s revealed will.” Cf. Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.348.

⁴ Calvin, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians, p. 142

under condemnation. To preach moralistically (“law light”) is likewise to give people the false impression that Christianity is a religion of ethics and morality, when all the while these moralistic exhortations only become the breeding ground for increased immorality. The law will do its work! Those who grew up in legalistic churches will probably agree with Dr. John Warwick Montgomery’s assessment of this problem: “In the little town in New York State where I grew up, there was one church that totally condemned dancing and most other forms of social contact between young people. This church was quite successful in this. Except for one little difficulty: there were far and away more illegitimate births in that congregation than in any other church in the community! Why? . . . The pastor was so busy preaching against things the Bible leaves as open questions that his preachments against true immorality were lost in the shuffle.”⁵ How sad . . . But true. The legalist offers his hearers no relief from guilt. The moralist tells his hearers that guilt is external and can be dealt with through simply resolving to try harder. Both legalism and moralism are utterly destructive of biblical Christianity.

In the last part of verse 7, Paul moves from the theoretical to the concrete. “*For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’*” As Leon Morris notes, “the tenth commandment is particularly well suited to his purpose [namely to explain what the preaching of the law does], for it is the only one that explicitly goes beyond the outward action to the inner root of the action, though as we see from the way Jesus handled some of the other commandments, this is the way they should all be interpreted (Matthew 5:21 ff., “you have heard that it was said, but I say . . .”). The noun NIV renders as *what it was to covet* denotes strong desire in general and is occasionally used in the New Testament of good desires....But in the overwhelming number of cases the strong desire is a lust for evil things, and ‘covet’ is a good way of bringing this out. The command is cited from LXX (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21), though without the objects there specified.”⁶ It is best to take Paul’s use of covetousness in a broad sense, as “encompassing illicit desires of every kind.”⁷ When the law is preached, it stirs up the sinful desires within us to do whatever has just been declared to be sinful! I wouldn’t have known something was wrong unless the law told me not to do it.

The key here the eschatological reading of Romans we have been laboring to set forth. Notice that Paul is speaking of what he *was* (past tense), as a representative of Israel, still in Adam, still under the condemnation of the law, before his crucifixion with Christ and burial with him in baptism. As a Jew, enslaved to sin, the law and death, Paul had no power to resist the evil desires that plagued him. When he heard the law, he desired to do the things forbidden by the law. He was still under control of the flesh (the dominion of Adam) and was powerless. In Romans 7:14 ff., Paul will go on to speak of what the law does to those who are in Christ.⁸ The law arouses sinful desires even in Christians because we are still in the “flesh” until the resurrection. The difference is that in Christ we now desire to do the good (obey the law) and we have the power to do so, since sin no longer has dominion over us and we are no longer under the dominion of the law but are under grace. Nevertheless, we far too often behave like what we

⁵ John Warwick Montgomery, How Do We Know There is a God? (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1973), p. 65.

⁶ Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 279.

⁷ Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 434

⁸ Mark W. Karlberg, “Israel’s History Personified: Romans 7:7-13 in Relation to Paul’s Teaching on the ‘Old Man,’” in Trinity Journal, Vol. 7 NS, No. 1 (Spring 1986), pp. 73-74.

were in Adam. This is why Paul commands us to “reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive unto God.” This is where our sanctification begins, with the realization of what we are “in Christ.”

What happens, then, to the person still in Adam, who hears the law? Paul pictures sin springing to action in verse 8 through the means of the law. “*But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.*” The imagery that Paul uses is that of warfare. When the law is preached, sin springs to life. Paul “uses a picturesque term which depicts sin as engaging in a military operation. Sin made the commandment its base of operations and from that vantage point produced in me every kind of covetousness desire. It is a distressing fact about human nature that any prohibition tends to awake in us a desire to transgress that prohibition.”⁹ When we hear the law, sin springs to life and kindles in us the desire to that which we are not supposed to do.¹⁰ A war breaks out within us. This is why we speak of the law as exciting and exacerbating human sinfulness. Sin is just waiting to spring to life!

The famous story from Augustine’s *Confessions* about stealing pears, is probably well worth noting, since it so clearly illustrates this very thing:

And what did I, wretched I, love in you, you theft of mine, you sin in the night committed by me in my sixteenth year? There was nothing beautiful about you, because you were merely theft. But are you in fact anything, for me to speak to you like this? Certainly the pears that we stole were beautiful since they were of your creation, yours, most beautiful of all, Creator of all, good God, God supremely good, and my true good. The pears were certainly beautiful, but it was not the pears my miserable soul desired, I had plenty of better pears of my own; I only took these ones in order that I might be a thief. Once I had taken them I threw them all away, and all I tasted in them was my own iniquity, which I enjoyed very much. For if I did put any of these pears in my mouth, what made it sweet to me was my sin.

This is a perfect description of that which Paul is addressing here in Romans.

Next, we must address the question of what Paul means when he says “*apart from law, sin is dead*” in the second clause of verse 8. The answer is relatively simple. “If there is no law, there is no transgression of law. Without a command there can be no disobedience. Paul is establishing the point that the law does not in practice function as a means of salvation. Rather, it is a means of establishing people’s guilt. It gives them something to sin against and in this way is an ally of sin. The commandment is aimed at our good, but it is quite possible for us to view it as a limitation on our freedom. Seen in that light it becomes a cause of resentment and opposition. Without something to rebel against there could be no rebels.”¹¹ Apart from the law, then, sin is certainly present, but sin is not incited until the law incites it. According to 1 Corinthians 15:56, Paul says that “*the power of sin is the law,*” indicating that dormant sinfulness springs to life whenever the law is proclaimed. This fact can be seen even from the dawn of redemptive

⁹ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 279-280

¹⁰ Says Cranfield in the same vein, “in the divine commandment . . . sin received its chance, its foothold in man’s life, its bridgehead, which it was able to take advantage of, to make use of, in order to produce in man all sorts of inordinate desires.” Cf. Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, I.350

¹¹ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 280.

history. “In the Genesis narrative the serpent was only able to attack the man because the commandment of Genesis 2:17 had been given.”¹² It was only once the commandment had been given that Satan had a specific objective to attack. Calvin concluded that “all evil therefore proceeds from the sin and the corruption of the flesh. The law is only the occasion of evil.”¹³ This is why legalism is so utterly destructive. The law will do its work and leave us without hope. It will give sin every excuse.

In verse 9, Paul declares “*once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.*” There are a number of different interpretations of this beginning with that of Calvin, who argued that Paul is speaking of how he viewed the law before his conversion and who at that time imagined that he was fulfilling its requirements, only to come to the grim realization at the time of his conversion that he was not fulfilling the law’s requirements at all.¹⁴ Although this is a very plausible interpretation, many commentators, like Morris, tweak this interpretation a bit because of the way in which Paul uses an emphatic “I” here for emphasis, something Paul often does to make the point that this was not only Paul’s own experience, but that he is also speaking on behalf of all of those under the law, those “in Adam,” and who from the perspective of their own bondage to sin, they think that they are fulfilling the requirements of the law when, in fact, they are not.¹⁵

The interpretive key is the correct understanding of the phrase—“*once I was alive apart from the law,*” as in the past tense because of Paul’s use of “once.” Says Morris, “*once* makes it clear that he is talking about a past experience, not a present reality . . . It is difficult to see how a Jewish boy from a pious family could ever *be apart from the law*, for from the earliest days he would have some instruction in the way to serve God. But he may mean *apart from law*, in the sense that there had been a time in his experience when he had not realized the force of the law’s demands, a time when he was under ‘no conviction of sin.’ Elsewhere Paul himself refers to a time when he had been ‘blameless’ as regards the righteousness of the law (Phil 3:6). This will not be unlike the rich young ruler who, confronted with the law’s demands, said, ‘*All these I have kept since I was a boy*’ (Luke 18:21).”¹⁶ Paul is alive not because he has been converted, but because, rhetorically speaking, he had not yet realized that his failure to obey the law brought him under the sentence of death. To paraphrase Paul, “I thought I was alive, I thought that all was well.” His ignorance was bliss. Paul did not know his true condition, and he thought everything was fine. And then . . . the commandment came and Paul realized, he was dead!

The sequence of events here is very important. Once [past tense] I was alive, because I thought I was fulfilling the law [apart from the law, properly understood]. Then, the commandment came [probably the command not to covet], and “sin sprang to life and I died.” As a pious Jew, Paul *thought* he was in conformity to the law. He *thought* he was alive, only because he was *apart from law*, i.e., the law properly understood. But when the specific commandment not to covet came [now truly understood], all of a sudden, Paul began to covet to such a degree he realized that he was a law-breaker and under the

¹² Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.351.

¹³ Calvin, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians, p. 143.

¹⁴ Calvin, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians, p. 144.

¹⁵ Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 280-281.

¹⁶ Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 281.

sentence of death. “Sin was there but dormant. When the commandment came to him, it was no longer possible to overlook its existence,” as sin “springs to life.” “When the commandment ‘came’ it killed forever the proud Pharisee thanking God he was not like other men and sure of his merits before God. It killed off the happy sinner, for it showed him the seriousness, not so much of sin in general as of his own sin.”¹⁷ Paul realizes how the law, which was holy, could bring death. His sin has just been exposed.¹⁸

In verse 10, Paul seeks to answer a very fundamental question raised by the gist of his argument—“was the law intended to bring life or death?” Says Paul, somewhat surprisingly, “*I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.*” Some important qualifications are certainly in order. The Mosaic covenant (the law) was clearly based upon a works-based principle. Under the terms of the Mosaic covenant, it is the people of God, rather than God himself, who swears the oath of ratification (cf. Exodus 24:3 cf., Genesis 15; Genesis 17:7).¹⁹ This means that obedience to the covenant would earn blessing (in this case, life), and disobedience to the commandments necessarily brought down covenant curses (death). This appears to be what Paul has in mind here and echoes our Lord’s words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).²⁰

If anyone were to obey the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant, life would be the reward. This is why it was necessary for Jesus as the mediator of the covenant of grace, to obey the law perfectly so that sinners can be justified—since Christ’s own obedience is credited to us through faith. Hence, Paul can declare in verse 12, “*So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.*” As we saw in

¹⁷ Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 282. This interpretation makes much more sense than does the interpretation of those such as Cranfield and Moo, who see the “I” here as limited to Paul’s rhetorical figure for Adam, who was alive before the commandment came [cf. Romans 5:13 ff], and who came under the sentence of death once the commandment had been broken. This interpretation does not fully consider the autobiographical comments Paul makes in Philippians 3:3-6, nor does it give due weight to the account in Luke 18:18 ff., of the rich young ruler, who without the eyes of faith, does not see the law for what it is, and who thinks he is alive and not under the sentence of death. “I have done all this from my youth,” he insists. Cf. Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.351; Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 437.

¹⁸ The *Heidelberg Catechism* puts it this way in Q & A 115: 115 Q. No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly: why then does God want them preached so pointedly? A. First, so that the longer we may live the more we come to know our own sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness. Second, so that, while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God’s image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.

¹⁹ M. G. Kline, By Oath Consigned, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, pp. 17-18

²⁰ According to Douglas Moo, “while God never intended the law to be a means of salvation, the law did come with the promises of life for obedience (cf. Lev. 18:5 [with] Romans 10:5; Psalm 19:7-10; Ezekiel 20:11; Luke 20:28). From these verses, it seems fair to conclude that the law would have given life *had it been perfectly* obeyed. In this sense the law ‘promises life,’ even though God did not give it with this intention—for he, of course, knew that the power of sin made it impossible for any human being to fulfill the law and so attain the promised life. Thus, although the commandment was ‘unto life,’ this same commandment ‘proved to be’ a cause of death for Israel.” Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 439.

our Old Testament lesson, when the prophet Isaiah realized he was in the presence of God, not only did he realize that God is holy, he realized that he was a sinner, undone from being in the presence of God. The law reflects the holiness of its author. The problem is not with the law, which reveals the will and the holy character of God. The law is holy, even though it brings death. The problem is human sinfulness, which is exposed, excited and exacerbated by the law which is in itself, holy, righteous and good, as is the will of God, which it reveals. As Isaiah was overcome by his guilt in the presence of the holy God, so too, we are convicted of our sin when confronted by the holy commandments of God.

In verse 11, Paul reiterates much of what he has already said in verse 8. *“For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.”* Once again, sin uses the commandments of God as a kind of base of operations. But the focus this time is upon the fact that sin deceived even Paul himself. The language he uses echoes Genesis 3:13, when the serpent said to Eve, “you will not surely die.” Recall that in the Genesis account, Satan focused on the negative—“you shall not eat from this tree,” thereby moving Eve’s focus off the positive assertion, “you can eat from any of the trees in the Garden.” Our own sin deceives us to the point that we bring the curse down upon ourselves. As God’s commands are directed towards attaining life, it is our sin that seizes the opportunity, so that our sin kills us through that which is good.²¹ While the commandments are holy, righteous and good, and intended to bring life, when proclaimed to a sinner they kindle sin and bring death. Sin springs to life, using the commandments as a base of operations. We may have thought we were in conformity with God’s will, when the commandment comes, sin springs to life and we die.

As he had done back in verse 7, Paul seeks to make his point by asking a rhetorical question in verse 12: *“Did that which is good, then, become death to me?”* “Some see this question as much the same as the one in verse 7, but there is a difference. There [Paul] was concerned with whether the law was an evil thing. The way he repudiated that view might perhaps lead some to infer that it was the commandment that brought death to him. Indeed, he came rather close to saving this,” (v. 10)—“I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.” But Paul never intends us to see the law in negative light. Paul says the law is good and his question here is “how did that which is good bring death?”²² We may put it this way: “If the law is good and yet death has resulted from its presence, does this mean that that which is good has become death to me—that it is to blame for my death? To this question as to that in v. 7, the answer is the emphatic denial [by no means]. The good thing is certainly not to blame for my death.”²³ Even though in Adam we are all reckoned sinners, Paul’s point here is that we have only ourselves to blame for the sentence of death which hangs over us apart from Christ.

In verse 13, Paul now restates the relationship between sin and the law. *“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.”* Although there are certainly other reasons as well, from Paul’s comments

²¹ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 283. Cranfield whole-heartedly concurs with this assessment: “Sin deceives man concerning the law, distorting it, and imposing a false image of it on his understanding, and also deceives him by making use of it in order to put God under an obligation to himself. Thus sin by deception succeeds in accomplishing Man’s death by means of which God `gave unto life.’” Cf. Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, I.352.

²² Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 289.

²³ Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, I.354.

here we find at least two purposes for which God gave the law now expressly stated. One reason God gave the law is that through the law, we recognize sin for what it is—sin! God’s will is no longer hidden from us nor tucked away in the recesses of our hearts. His will has been published for all to see and any violation of his commandment is sin. The other reason is that through the law, sin’s sinfulness might only be enhanced.²⁴ Sin is not a mere shortcoming, nor is it a mistake in judgment, as John Wesley once put it. “The law was given that sin might be seen for what it is. Without the law we would not recognize sin in its deepest evil; we would not see it as rebellion against the command of God.”²⁵

Therefore, when we read or hear the law of God, we not only know what sin is, we know that our own sin is personal treason against our creator and redeemer! Because the law of God is holy and his commandments are holy, righteous and good, our sin can now be seen for what it is, sin which is utterly sinful! This is why if any of the sons and daughters of Adam are to be set free from sin and death, we must be set free from the condemnation of the law. The commandments have come, excited us to sin, thereby exposing all of us to be law breakers and under God’s curse, *if* we are apart from Jesus Christ.

But if we are united to Jesus Christ, through faith, buried with him in baptism, and raised with him to newness of life, Jesus’ perfect law-keeping is reckoned to us and his death pays for the guilt of all of our sins. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have been set free from the law’s condemnation, because in Christ, we are reckoned as “law keepers.” Even though the law still exposes our sin, even though it still excites to us to greater levels of sin, in Jesus Christ we have been set from the law’s condemning power. Instead of pronouncing God’s curse upon us, the law now reveals to us the will God which Jesus has fulfilled through his own perfect obedience. But in these same commands which formerly condemned us, we also learn the will of God now that we have been set free to obey God with hearts filled with gratitude. Although we would not have known what sin was without the law, we would not have known what grace is apart from Jesus Christ, who has died for all of those times the law incites us to sin and exposes us for who we really are. And that same Jesus has given us his blessed Holy Spirit, so that we are free to obey those very same commandments now written upon our hearts. The law has revealed to us our sin. Now that we are alive in Jesus, it reveals to us how to live lives of gratitude before God. For we have been set free.

²⁴ According to Cranfield, “The true conclusion to be drawn is not that the good thing is responsible for my death but that sin made use of the good thing in order to accomplish my death. The sentence further contains two final clauses, the former of them [“in order that sin might be recognized as sin”] expressing the purpose that sin might be shown to be sin (by the fact of its misusing God’s good gift to men), the latter [“so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful”] expressing the further purpose that by means of the commandment sin’s sinfulness might actually be enhanced. These purposes are God’s, though they are neither the whole, nor yet the ultimate element, of God’s intention in giving the law. But the fact that they are embraced within God’s intention does not mean that God and His law are to blame for man’s death, any more than the fact that it was part of his purpose in sending His Son into the world that men’s sin should be revealed in its true colors as enmity to God by the reaction which Christ’s ministry of love provoke means that God is to blame for the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. The two final clauses are an indication that the dire results of men’s encounter with the law, so far being a proof of the triumph of sin or of the imperfection of the law, are a sign that God’s purpose finally and completely to overthrow sin is being advanced.” Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.354-355.

²⁵ Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 289.