

FTB 68 Is the Law a Blessing or a Curse?

Romans 5 tells us, “**Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned- 13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come**” (Rom 5:12-14).

These verses help us to answer a very important question that has been a cause of much confusion in the church today: God’s Law, was it a burden or a blessing? Most in the church today would tell us that God’s Law was a burden that Christ had to come and do away with. They view the Law of Sinai as something that was a burden to Israel as well as us today. However, to say this would imply that God delivered the Israelites from the burden of Egyptian slavery only to lead them to the desert and put them under His own form of slavery. What kind of deliverance would that be? John tells us, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3 (ESV)). To help us see why God gave the commandments let us look at a few verses showing their purpose:

Deuteronomy 4:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ Therefore you shall keep His statutes and His commandments, which I command you today, **that it may go well with you and with your children after you**, and that you may **prolong your days** in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

Deuteronomy 5:29 (ESV)

²⁹ Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear Me and to keep all My commandments, **that it might go well with them** and with their descendants forever!

Deuteronomy 5:33 (ESV)

³³ You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you **may live, and that it may go well with you**, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

Deuteronomy 6:17–18 (ESV)

¹⁷ You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which He has commanded you. ¹⁸ And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, **that it may go well with you**, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers

Deuteronomy 7:12–14 (ESV)

¹² “And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that He swore to your fathers. ¹³ He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. **He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock**, in the land that he swore to your fathers to

give you. ¹⁴ **You shall be blessed above all peoples.** There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock.

Deuteronomy 10:12–13 (ESV)

¹² “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today **for your good?**”

Doesn't this sound like God gave the commandments as a blessing, not a burden? And these verses are just a small sampling without mentioning Psalm 119 or Leviticus 26 etc. So what went wrong if the Law is a blessing? Obviously something did as Hebrews 8:7 tells us, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.” So what was the fault of the Sinai covenant? Nothing at all, it wasn't the fault of the Law but the fault of the people following the Law. Verse 8 goes on to tell us, “But God found **fault with the people** and said: ‘The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’” (Heb 8:8). The problem was that the people of Israel, like many today, had a lack of a willing heart to obey them. This doesn't mean that they were capable of following perfectly, simply that they didn't care to even try. They couldn't even grasp the spiritual value and benefit of following the Law because they were spiritually blind (2 Cor 3:14-16). Paul tells us that the “Man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). Again, the problem wasn't the Law but the people. God knew they wouldn't be able to keep this Law, but it wasn't because of any problem within the Law. God promised that He would fix this problem by placing His Spirit within us. God said, “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” ²⁰

Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19–20). When Christ creates a new Heart through His Spirit within us, we will follow this laws and decrees “so that it will go well with us.” Following the Law isn't now, or ever was, a means of salvation because faith alone is for salvation for us today as well as for Adam, Abraham or Moses. However, does this faith nullify the blessing of the Law? NO! Paul even states in the New Testament, “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law” (Rom 3:31).

So how does our opening verses fit into this line of thought? Verses 12-13 simply tells us that just as sin came into this world through Adam, that sin was passed on to all men, causing physical and spiritual death to come into this world and have its affects on everyone because there isn't a person alive who hasn't sinned. Notice that this is even before Moses and the Law though. Because sin isn't just defined by a breaking of the Law. Even a baby is born sinful (Ps 51:5) because of the sinful flesh inherited through Adam. We are born with a death certificate even without the Law. However, when the Law isn't there “sin isn't taken into account.” What does that mean? We were going to die because of sin, isn't that being held accountable? Yes it is, but the sin wasn't taken into account in man's heart. God needed to come and pay the penalty not only for

Adam's sin passed down to us, but also for the breaking of the Sinai covenant and the Laws written in our conscience that were there even before Moses.

I believe Paul brings this up to answer any argument that might arise from the previous chapters. Someone could easily argue that all could not be sinners if they didn't know they were sinning. Paul answers this by showing that even without the written law, there was a law written on their hearts and disobedience to that still resulted in deserving death. It is the same for us today. We often view the Old Testament as all being under the Mosaic Law but nothing is further from the truth. Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. The rules for religion were the same in the days of Adam, Noah and Abraham as they are for us today. It was only in the short period from Moses to Christ that the written Law was given and brought a whole new era of **consequences** and failures. One purpose of this period of time was **to foreshadow** Christ who would redeem us from sin, both those sins coming from breaking the law of Moses and those breaking the law in our hearts as Adam did. Again, Jesus didn't just free us from the condemnation of the Mosaic law but also from the curse of the first man, Adam. In other words, we live in a time today, much like the days of Adam and Abraham. These men had a relationship with God and were not **bound** by a list of do's and don'ts that Moses had. Moses was **blessed** by promises that came through the obedience of these Laws. Likewise, we are not **bound** by the written code anymore, but we **live** in the Spirit desiring to obey the written code, being capable of doing so only through the Spirit of God that comes from our relationship with Christ Jesus. Apart from this relationship, there is no redemption from death. In fact, the death that reigned from the days of Adam to Moses is further proof that all men have sinned even without a written code to sin against. These men didn't transgress any laws, but were guilty by association with Adam who has passed down to natural man, a sin-filled flesh that makes us guilty without a written code to break. The written code wasn't the damning sin, it was actually a blessing that was to reveal the damning sins to us. What do I mean? The New Testament tells us the blessed purpose of the Law, "**The law was added so that the trespass might increase.** But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5:20-21) Also in Galatians, "Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? **Absolutely not!** For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law" (Gal 3:19-25). This doesn't mean we are no longer follow the Law, it simply means we no longer are supervised by it. Instead, we are supervised by the Spirit inside of us, moving us to desire and love the Law of God. The fault that was in man (that came from Adam) has been removed by Christ so the Law no only drives us to Christ but also blesses us as promised in so many verses.

Jesus said, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little” (Luke 6:47). As Romans told us, the Law was added so the trespass would increase. The Law has shown us our need for Jesus. We stand without excuse knowing we there was a commandment that has been broken and it is taken into account, but thankfully it has been placed on the account of Jesus. Now I just desire to serve Him and His commandments. Praise God!

One final comment on the opening verses. There are many comparisons that can be made between Adam and Christ. Adam didn’t break any of the written commands that Moses had but he still died. He was a pattern of the One to come. Jesus didn’t break any commands written or otherwise, yet He took the curse that was placed upon all men, animals, plants, heavens and earth by Adam, and placed it upon Himself so that we and *all* of His creation might be delivered from our bondage to decay. In other words, just as Adams disobedience affects every single person of mankind, God’s obedience through Christ affects every single person of mankind.

In Genesis 5:1-2 we read, “When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, He called *them* “man”. Literally, the Hebrew reads, “He called them Adam.” This again shows that all humankind would be modeled after the first Adam in their nature. Jesus, was the second Adam to represent not just natural man, but spiritual man: “So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second Man from heaven” (1 Cor 15:45-48).

Another interesting parallel can also be made with the curse of Adam and Christ. We read, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). We read in Genesis that as a result of eating from the tree, Adam was cursed with pain, thorns, sweat and death. Christ himself hung on a tree (Gal 3:13) taking us back to the Fall. He suffered pain (Heb 5:7; Ps 22), wore a crown of thorns (Mark 15:17), sweat blood (Luke 22:44), and died for us, but more than that, He rose from the dead. He indeed became the very curse of man in order to redeem us from this curse through His death and resurrection, so that there would be no more pain (Rev 21:4; 22:3). Praise God! It is true that the price of the curse has been paid, but it will not be completely delivered until the end of the world (2 Peter 3:10). We read, “But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13; see also Rev 21:1; 20:11). Therefore, the results of the gift from Jesus are eternal and far greater than the temporal consequences of Adam.

The Law not only promised to be a blessing the Israelites, but it stands as a blessing for us today as well. Jesus came to fulfill the Law in our stead, removing the condemnation of the Law and blessing us by putting that Law on our hearts to obey through the Spirit of God now living in us. This is no burden, believe me!