

Romans 7:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Analysis

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

—Paul emphatically vindicates law's character after showing its inability to sanctify. Hagios (ἅγιος, "holy") means set apart, reflecting God's nature. Dikaios (δίκαιος, "just/righteous") indicates law's equity and conformity to God's righteousness. Agathos (ἀγαθός, "good") describes intrinsic moral excellence and benevolent purpose.

The threefold description defends law against implications that it's sinful (v. 7) or evil (v. 13). Law perfectly reflects God's character—the problem isn't law's quality but humanity's corruption. This distinction is crucial: sin's misuse of law doesn't taint law's essential goodness. The physician's diagnosis (law) isn't evil because it reveals terminal illness (sin). This prepares for the conclusion that sin, not law, deserves blame for spiritual death.

Historical Context

Jewish reverence for Torah as God's perfect revelation forms the background. Paul doesn't diminish law's divine origin or moral authority; rather, he clarifies its purpose in God's redemptive plan. Law reveals sin and drives people to Christ—a holy, just, and good function, though not a sanctifying one.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does affirming law's holiness, justice, and goodness change how you read Old Testament commandments?
2. What's the difference between respecting law's divine authority and expecting law to accomplish what only Christ can?
3. How might properly honoring law's goodness while resting in Christ's fulfillment prevent both legalism and antinomianism?

Interlinear Text

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| ὥστε | ὁ | μὲν | νόμος | ἁγία | καὶ | ἡ | ἐντολὴ | ἁγία |
| Wherefore | G3588 | G3303 | the law | holy | and | G3588 | the commandment | holy |
| G5620 | | | G3551 | G40 | G2532 | | G1785 | G40 |
| καὶ | δικαία | καὶ | ἀγαθή | | | | | |
| and | just | and | good | | | | | |
| G2532 | G1342 | G2532 | G18 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 1:8 (Word): But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;

Psalms 119:137 (Righteousness): Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.

Psalms 119:172 (Righteousness): My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Romans 7:14 (Word): For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Nehemiah 9:13 (Word): Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

Romans 3:31 (Word): Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Deuteronomy 10:12 (Parallel theme): And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

Deuteronomy 4:8 (Righteousness): And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?