

Romans 7:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Analysis

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.—Paul anticipates objection: if law is good (v. 12) but produces death (v. 10), isn't good itself deadly? *Mē genoito* (μὴ γένοιτο)—his strongest negation—emphatically denies this. Law remains good; sin bears sole responsibility for death.

But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good—*Hina phanē hamartia* (ἵνα φανῆ ἀμαρτία, "that it might be shown to be sin") reveals law's purpose: unmasking sin's true character. Sin's ability to pervert even God's good law into death's instrument exposes sin's exceeding malignity. **That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful**—*Kath' hyperbolēn hamartōlos* (καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἀμαρτωλός, "sinful beyond measure") intensifies sin's vileness. Law's function is diagnostic—revealing sin's lethal nature and desperate need for remedy.

Historical Context

Paul concludes his defense of law's goodness while explaining its condemning ministry. The purpose wasn't arbitrary condemnation but accurate diagnosis. Only when sin appears 'exceeding sinful' do people abandon self-righteousness and flee

to Christ. Law serves God's redemptive plan by demolishing false hopes in human ability.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How has law functioned to make sin appear 'exceeding sinful' in your life rather than merely disappointing or regrettable?
2. What might it reveal about your view of sin if law's exposure doesn't drive you to desperate dependence on Christ?
3. How does understanding law's diagnostic purpose help you receive conviction without condemnation?

Interlinear Text

Τὸ οὖν ἀγαθοῦ ἐμοὶ γένηται θάνατον μὴ¹
G3588 Was then that which is good unto me made death God forbid
G3767 G18 G1698 G1096 G2288 G3361

γένηται ἀλλὰ ἡ ἀμαρτία ἵνα φανῆ ἀμαρτία διὰ
made But G3588 sin that it might appear sin by
G1096 G235 G266 G2443 G5316 G266 G1223

τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοι κατεργαζομένη θάνατον ἵνα
G3588 that which is good in me working death that
G18 G3427 G2716 G2288 G2443

γένηται καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἀμαρτωλὸς ἡ ἀμαρτία διὰ
made exceeding G5236 sinful G3588 sin by
G1096 G2596 G268 G266 G1223

τῆς ἐντολῆς
G3588 the commandment G1785

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:21 (Word): Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

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