



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

Courage is defined by one source as the quality of spirit that enables someone to face difficulty or pain with bravery, rather than fear. One example of such courage is the Italian monk, Savonarola (1452–1498). He was educated at the feet of his grandfather who was a medical doctor “of moral principles.” This upbringing played a great role in his preaching. His sermons became known throughout Italy because he preached a Gospel of repentance. He believed “the wickedness of the people” and “the immorality of the clergy” needed to change if God was to be pleased. Many repented of their sin, but Pope Alexander VI was angry and sentenced him to death by public hanging and burning. Savonarola died quoting Psalm 27:1, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, Whom shall I fear?” May God grant to us today this same brave spirit!



2010



2019

Jamey & Sara Stout
Argyle, IA

The *ageless* Jamey and Sara Stout were married in June 2001 during their final years of Bible college. In 2005 they moved to Virginia Beach to begin their seminary training in preparation for pastoral ministry. While at VBTS, they distinguished themselves as a couple who magnified grace and had a heart to serve Christ's Body. It is nearly impossible to talk with them about Jesus Christ and ministry without tears welling up in their eyes. Upon Jamey's graduation with his MDiv in May 2010, he accepted a call to be the pastor of Bethel Bible Church in Argyle, Iowa. This town sits in the SW corner of Iowa and nearly touches both Missouri and Illinois. A key verse for their ministry is Psalm 27:8, “When you said, ‘seek my face,’ my heart said to you, ‘your face, LORD, will I seek.’” Jamey says, “If I keep this verse as my top priority, then my ministry and family life fall into place.” Thanks Jamey and Sara, your lives are an example of grace and truth to us all!





Is There Tension Between Law and Grace? Dr. Daniel Davey

Today the words “gospel” and “law” are often held in tension, but need it be this way? When reflecting on the book of Romans, most of us view the overarching theme as the Gospel of God (1:1, 9, 15-17). Surely Martin Luther was right when he said, “This Epistle is really the chief part of the N.T. and the *very purest Gospel*, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day.” Yet many might be surprised to learn that within the letter to the Romans, the word “law” is used more than 70 times; it is used more in this letter than in Paul’s other 12 N.T. letters combined. For this reason, Luther also wrote that the *law* must be “rightly understood and thoroughly comprehended” if one is to properly understand the Gospel in Romans. How do *gospel* and *law* work together in this letter? Let me share three short declarations of the law by Paul, which I pray will stimulate your mind to consider your freedom in the Gospel of grace.

First (3:20), *through the law is the knowledge of sin.* This fact is the cornerstone of Paul’s theology. The law defines sin (cf. 4:15; 5:13). This is very personal to Paul as he later reveals in 7:7 (NIV), “I would not have known what sin was except through the law.” Luther was correct when he said, “The principal point of the law is to make men not better, but worse; that is, [the law] shows them their sin.” In short, the law contains no redemptive value for the human soul; rather, its purpose is to identify sin.

Second (7:5), *our sinful passions were aroused by the law.* Paul had already explained in 6:19 that as “slaves to impurity” we were controlled by sin. His point now, however, recalls our initial response to the law’s function while “we lived in the flesh.” When the law exposed our fleshly passions as sin, we refused its assertion, and this resulted in greater rebellion and deeper sin (cf. 1:24–28). Eve experienced this very rebellion in the Garden. God’s command was misused by Satan to make the forbidden fruit “good” and “desirable” in her eyes (Gen. 3:6). Like Eve, our flesh rejected the law’s demand, and we foolishly created our own boundaries resulting in greater sin.

Third (7:6), *we have now been released from the law, having died to that which held us captive.* Paul draws a parallel from 7:2–3 stating that the O.T. marriage laws have authority *only* while the husband (in this case) is living. In effect, death initiates a definitive change of relationship between the law and the widow. Paul reasons from this illustration that each believer “has died” to the law “through the body (death) of Christ” and now belongs to him. Christ’s death and the believer’s participation in it fully liberates a Christian from Moses’ law.

As these three passages are considered together, a believer should come to the joyous conclusion that the law’s authority ends when one’s faith is placed in Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to show us our need—we are sinners (3:20). Faith in Christ, however, places us “under grace” and concludes the need for the law (6:14). Robert Jewett observes, “To define salvation so explicitly in terms of freedom from the law represents a radical break from traditional Judaism.” This is exactly Paul’s point! In fact, the redemptive consequences of these passages accomplish three blessings: (a) it *eternally supplies* righteousness to the sinner (3:22); (b) it *totally liberates* one from the law’s authority (7:4, 6a); and (c) it *fully provides* one with the Spirit’s power to live pleasing to God (5:5; 7:6b). Praise God for his Gospel (1:16)!