

Our Struggle with Sin (*Part 1*)

Romans 7:7-25

Sermon-in-a-Sentence: God's Word is holy, righteous and good because it helps us to know what sin is and it makes us aware of how sinful our sinful nature really is.

All of us struggle with sin! Many of us, I suspect, have a bad habit, a besetting sin that defies our best efforts to change. We've tried everything we know to do—we consult the Word of God, we pray, we redouble our efforts—but all to no avail. So, we are tempted to give up.

The Apostle Paul also struggled with sin. As a Jew who held the Mosaic Law and the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the "Old Testament") in very high esteem, he frequently went to the Scriptures to find help in his battle against sin. But what he discovered was that the Law only served to increase his sense of guilt and actually stimulated him to sin more! We can identify with Paul's struggle. What are we to do?

In Romans 6-8 Paul teaches us how to be victorious in our struggle against sin. We must learn how to appropriate God's grace. But does this emphasis on God's grace somehow diminish the importance of the Law, God's Word?

Paul's emphasis on God's grace raised four objections in the minds of his Jewish readers:

- 1) Romans 6:1-2 – "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?"

Answer: Absolutely not! Why not? Because sin does not bring more of God's grace into our lives; it actually prevents us from experiencing God's grace and blessing in our lives.

- 2) Romans 6:15 – "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?"

Answer: Absolutely not! Why not? Because each of us is a slave. If we seek to earn God's blessing and favor by living under the law, then we are a slave to sin that leads to death. But if we live in dependence on God's grace, then we are a slave to righteousness that leads to the enjoyment of the blessings of eternal life in our daily life.

- 3) Romans 7:7 – "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin?"

Answer: Absolutely not! Why not? Because, even though the law points out and may even stimulate sin in our lives, it is nevertheless holy, righteous and good.

- 4) Romans 7:13 – "Did that which is good, then, become death to me?"

Answer: Absolutely not! Why not? Because, the problem is not God's law; the problem is Man's sinful nature!

- In our own struggle with sin, we may be tempted to think that God's Word is the problem because it condemns and convicts us of sin; and when we try, and try even harder, to live up to its standards, it seems like we fail even more!
- With the Lord's help, under the leading and with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we can learn how to deal successfully with our sinful nature.
- The key to victory over sin in our lives is to take the next step of obedience. We must develop a habit pattern of obedience to the Word of God rather than of submission to the

evil desires of our sinful nature.

- Used rightly, God's Word serves as a mirror that reveals our inner being and shows us how sinful we really are so that we can take action to correct the problem (James 1:22-25).

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? [*NLT / TEV*– sinful. Is the Law a bad thing because it highlights our sinfulness?] **Certainly not!**

1. Because the Law reveals sin; it helps us to know what sin is (7:7-8)

Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 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 Law warns us that sin is real and that it is dangerous but it cannot save us from the death penalty that sin brings upon us.
- When Paul says that apart from Law, sin is dead, he is not saying that there is no sin when there is no Law (cp. Romans 5:13). Rather, he is saying that apart from the Law, sin is latent; it exists but it cannot be seen; it is not apparent.
- Sin is revealed, it is made apparent and evident by the Law.

2. Because the Law reveals the true nature of our sinful nature (7:9-11)

9 Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

- Paul is not saying that he was spiritually alive but then died once he became aware of the Law. Rather, he is saying that the Law served to reveal and expose the fact that he was guilty of sin and therefore, spiritually dead.
- "Until we realize how wicked sin really is, we will never want to oppose it and live in victory." (*Wiersbe, Be Right, p. 89*)
- The Law arouses and stimulates sin in our nature.
- "Instead of giving life, the law brought condemnation; instead of producing holiness, it stimulated sin." (*NIV Study Bible, p. 1715*)
- Furthermore, it is unable to give us spiritual life (Galatians 3:21-22).

11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

- "Since the law points out the path of righteousness, it points to life. But since sin reigns in our natures, the law means judgment and death for us. When we focus on the law we are deceived into sinning, which thus 'kills' our spiritual lives." (*NKJV Study Bible, p. 1890*)

12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

- "Our problem with sin is not the fault of the holy law of God, only of how our sinful nature responds to the law." (*NKJV Study Bible, p. 1890*)
- Cp. Mark 10:17-27.