

The Problem of Sin is Worse than we thought.

The Problem of Sin is Worse Than We Thought

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Romans 7

Introduction - Our Society does not take sin seriously.

- You don't often hear people publicly admitting to sin.
 - I've made a mistake, I should have done that better

When we look at ourselves with honesty, we admit that we don't take sin seriously

- We make allowance for it in our lives
- We think that we can deal with it when we want to.

It's not a question of do we take sin seriously, we don't. The question is why don't we take sin seriously?

- My guess is that we underestimate the power of sin in life and that we underestimate God's hatred of sin.

Today we are going to join in progress Paul's letter to the Church in Rome.

- We are jumping in at chapter 7
- So far, Paul has been building a case for salvation apart from works. We are not saved because we do the right things.
- In chapter, Paul begins to build a case for sanctification apart from the law, the law of God on its own does not have the power to make us holy.

The first 6 verses in Romans 7 show us our spiritual reality. This is a descriptor of your status if you are a Christian.

Romans 7:1–6 (HCSB)

¹ Since I am speaking to those who understand law, brothers, are you unaware that the law has authority over someone as long as he lives? ² For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law regarding the husband. ³ So then, if she gives herself to another man while her husband is living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. Then, if she gives herself to another man, she is not an adulteress. ⁴ Therefore, my brothers, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the crucified body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions operated through the law in every part of us and bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

There are a few things going on this section.

1. An example from marriage
2. The marriage example applied to our standing with God through Jesus

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3. The conclusion, we are released from the law so that we can serve God in a better way.

Let's quickly touch on these. The example from marriage

- A couple is married, and is bound together by marriage.
- When one of them dies, the other is no longer legally bound.

Simple, let's apply that to our standing with God through Jesus.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins. In God's sight, when you become a Christian the part of you that is bound by sin is put to death as well, through Jesus sacrifice. So legally, in God's eyes, sin no longer has any claim on your life.

Let me remind you, that sin's claim on your life was death, physical and spiritual death. That claim is resolved in Jesus. No are no longer sin's slave, you are completely free to love God and serve him without any obstacles.

Let me give you an illustration to help you understand this.

- Pretend that you are married
- How would your heart feel towards your spouse?
- You would want to daily show love and faithfulness, holding nothing back and being completely free and open.
- Take that heart desire, and use it to shape your perspective on your relationship with God.
- That is our ideal, but I know and you know and Paul knows, that none of us are living this out the way that we want.
- Why is this the case? How come we want to serve God and we have a clue to how loving and amazing he is, but then we still sin?

The title is starting to make sense, the problem of sin is far worse than we thought. We have the opportunity for a perfect relationship with God, but we still sin. If it were easy, this wouldn't happen, but's harder then we want to admit.

Let's learn a little more about how sin is working against each one of us. **Sin's plan is to use God's law against you.**

Romans 7:7-8 (HCSB)

⁷ What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, **Do not covet.** ⁸ And sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law sin is dead.

The law that Paul is referring to is what the Jewish people call, "The Law of Moses". It's really God's law that was spoken to Moses on Mount Sinai. Maybe the most well-known part of that law is the 10 Commandments. Do any of you know what

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commandment number 10 is? Do not covet, and then there is a whole list of things that you aren't to covet.

There is a reason why I asked for the passage from Genesis 3 to be read out earlier. In that passage, we see how sin takes advantage of this particular part of God's law, to deceive and damage Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

One of sin's strategies is to take something good that God has made and twist it to make it harmful instead.

- In the Garden of Eden, God's command to Adam and Eve was to not eat from a tree, because if they ate from it they would surely die.
 - This tree's fruit was the knowledge of good and evil.
- The command was helpful, it was preventing their death
- Sin bent that command and used it against them.
 - Sin questioned God's intentions, made him seem petty, "God knows that your eyes will be opened, and then you will be like God..."
 - Now, the command has switched in Eve's mind from being a protection for her to being a hindrance to what she really wants.
 - And what she wants is something that she can't have. (that's coveting)

When you look at sin this way, you see how it started as a desire in her heart to covet, and then progressed to her actions, where she is actively doing what God said not to do.

- A lot of right living is understanding that we need for God to help us to want the right things.
- Because we find ourselves in the same situation as Eve, doing what we want. How much better would it be if we asked and prayed for God to shape our hearts to want what he wants for us?
- That would be a real help in our fight against sin, because when we allow sin to control what we want, then it can use almost anything in our lives to justify that want, including bending God's good and holy commands to become a hindrance rather than a help in your life.

Eve wanted a wrong thing, and she acted on the want, and she sinned. Sin had used the command of God to show itself in her life, and it wants to do the same thing to you.

Romans 7:9–12 (HCSB)

⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life ¹⁰ and I died. The commandment that was meant for life resulted in death for me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

Let me just remind you of who it is that wrote these words. Paul was a former Pharisee, and he was one of the best Pharisees that there were.

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- The Pharisee's claim to fame was their incredible attention to detail for teaching God's law.
- The name "Pharisee" comes from an Aramaic word which means to separate, divide or distinguish.
- They wanted to be set out from the rest of the Jewish people because of their obedience to God's law.
- Paul was a former Pharisee, he knew God's law inside and out.
- So if knowing God's law was all that it takes to beating sin, Paul would have beat sin.
- But Paul himself recognizes that knowledge alone isn't enough to win this fight.

I hope that my point here is clear, if Paul, who probably knew God's law better than any of us, can't beat sin, we probably shouldn't think that we can beat it either.

Up to verse 13, Paul has been describing how God's law is not able to save us from sin. It was meant for our good, but sin has used it for our harm

Now Paul turns his attention to our own efforts to fight sin.

Romans 7:15–20 (HCSB)

¹⁵ For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷ So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but it is the sin that lives in me.

Next week we are taking a look at God's righteousness, and so that's when we will really zero in on this. But for now, it's worth pointing out that Paul recognizes that there is no righteousness that will come from his flesh, or his efforts.

- No matter how badly he wants to do right, he isn't able to do it.
- At the same time, he recognizes that it's not right to base his identity on those wrong actions, instead he says, "I'm no longer the one doing it, but it is the sin that lives in me."
- I don't point this out to give you some sort of an excuse for sinning. God doesn't excuse sin.
- I point it out to say that if you are a Christian, as Paul was when he wrote these words, that you can recognize that there is a battle going on. Sin is working against you, trying to steal and kill and destroy you.
- That should lead you to a trust and reliance on God and not to a shameful disgraced life of hiding because of sin.

We can also be encouraged by Paul's honest evaluation. Although he was a key leader in the early Church, he doesn't pretend to be without sin.

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- Instead of ignoring sin, he brings it out into the open and deals with it.

I have a very useful project for you to take on this week. Keep a daily log of sin's attacks against you. Write down the ways that it is trying to manipulate you, be aware of the places where it thinks it can take the goodness of God and twist those into you wanting what you can't have. Look for:

- Places where you are becoming isolated. Sin wants to divide and conquer
- Places where you are becoming numb. Sin wants to take the joy out of life.
- Places where you are justifying wrong behaviour. Sin wants to see you defy God.
- Places where you are renaming wrong behaviour. Sin wants to blind your vision
- Places where your emotions are working against you. Anger, frustration, etc. Can be used for good, but can also cause great harm
- Places where you see people as your enemies, sin is the real enemy.

There is no "Self "help" solution to winning against sin.

This is very important for us to understand in the context of our information age. As a culture, we think that understanding is the key to our success.

- That point of view leaves us short for a couple of reasons
 - We don't know what God knows.
 - No matter what score you get on the test, you are not all knowing, and therefore, there will always be a piece of information that you don't have.
 - We don't always apply the information in the same way that God would
 - If we knew what
 - Most importantly, we don't have the power and ability to act perfectly in light of whatever information that we learn.

What I am saying is that for a society that thinks it has the answer, our current experiences show us that we don't have the ability to make the right answers happen.

So now we are in a real dilemma. We don't want to sin. We have been adopted by God, called his beloved and we have his word, which is truth. We know of his love, but still we find ourselves sinning. Where do we go from here?

Let's see what God did for Adam and Eve when they sinned.

The first thing that God did was list off the many consequences that were now going to play out because of sin.

Sin's oldest deception is that sin won't cause your death. But that day, Adam and Eve began to die. And so did the world. God's perfect world began to come undone.

Yet in that moment, God also offered them some help.

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- Adam and Eve were no longer innocent, they realized that they were naked, and they were inadequate to cover themselves.
- The problem of sin was far worse than they thought. They tried to find solutions to fix what was wrong.
 - They hid from God
 - They sewed fig leaves together for clothes.
 - But none of it helped. God found them. God spoke to them. They were fully exposed in the eyes of a holy God, and there was nothing that they could do.
- God's solution was that their shame could be covered if an animal were to die. That animals skins were made into a form of clothing, and they lived now with their eyes wide open to the knowledge that evil was now present in God's world.

What do we do when we sin? Usually our first reaction is to hide it. Then we try to cover ourselves in some way, make it so we feel better, or look right. But none of it works. This problem of sin is far worse than we thought.

It's so bad that God himself sent his Son to the earth, in order that he could show us the full measure of God's love and saving power. When Jesus died on the cross, his death paid the price of the sinner, and sin no longer holds a claim over any one whose life is in Jesus Christ.

We are now covered by his life. We are now on display, as the righteousness of God, there is no reason to hide.

God has chosen to make you his righteousness, and sin his enemy. And this fight against sin in your life is one that God is fighting.

Romans 5:20–21 (HCSB)

²⁰ The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.