

LD 2; Rom. 3:9-20; Rom. 7:7-25; Understanding Sin I. Sin in Romans II. Sin is Exposed

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you know how I start almost every sermon? The answer is- I start almost every sermon with a question? The reason why I do this is because questions along with their given answer are a teaching tool that has stood the test of time. In fact, many parts of the book of Romans follows this same pattern. It is called a diatribe in the traditional sense- where a rhetorical question and answer are given to teach a point. In fact, the Q and A format is what makes our own catechism such a beneficial teaching tool. The question that Romans 7 raises today is this- is the Law sin? Is the Law good or is the Law bad? As I said last week, ignorance is not bliss! But it is also true, that the truth hurts! And sometimes people would rather not know the truth in order to avoid the pain! People in our world today tend to have a very high view of themselves. I am not perfect they will say, but I am better than most. But is it proper to compare ourselves to others- or is there a different standard that we should use? Today we see that Jesus Christ uses the Law to expose our sin in order to drive us to only righteous one.

I. Sin in Romans

In our first point, we consider the use of the word "sin" and its components in the book of Romans. Romans uses the word sin or the effects of sin 45 times in this book. So there are a lot of aspects to sin- specifically where it comes from, how it is spread, to whom it is spread and the consequences of its spread. As we found in 3:9, sin has been spread to all- both Jew and Gentile. Romans 3 is perhaps the epicenter of Romans teaching on sin and its spread. As 3:23 puts it, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All men miss- they do not measure up. All are alike in this sin- being the children of Adam as we find in ch. 5- by Adam's active disobedience in the garden sin has been spread to all his descendants and death through sin. As 5:12 reads, sin came into the world through one man, and death spreads to all because all sinned. So we could say that all mankind is now totally depraved due to original sin. Romans starts in chapter 1 by saying that sinful man is ignorant- 1:13 and foolish- 1:22. Also godless and rebellious- 1:18- unrighteous. Not able nor desiring to do good- chapter 3 says- each going their own way and doing their own thing. They are bad chapter 13 says- and

corrupt. And as Romans nears the end in 14:23- we read that whatever is not of faith is sin. In other words, if you do not have faith, all of your actions are reckoned sinful. That means that unbelieving man cannot do good or please God. But to summarize the biblical teaching on sin- what is it? How would you define what sin is? Well, there are basically two main words for sin in Romans. Harmartia- which means to miss the mark. And anomos- which means lawlessness. Harmartia is found in 3:9- where we are all under sin. We miss the mark- we failed to hit the target. We fail as we do not pass the test. And Anomos- that word is found in 2:12- for all who sinned apart from the law with perish without the law. All who sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. So when we put these concepts together, we come to see that to sin is to do something wrong. An error that falls short of the goal. To break God's standard by your actions. Either by your failing to do what you should- or by positively doing what you should not. Both in ignorance and high handed- it is to act wickedly. We transgress as we break a rule. Wicked actions come from a fallen heart- our desires are polluted so our hands are stained in blood. But remember, mankind is ignorant of this fact! We suppress the truth- we think ignorance is bliss! We are happy to keep our head in the sand. Our idea of good has been changed to fit our ability. In other words- all my actions are good because they were justified. I had a good reason for everything I did. But as we continue, we see that man needs to be given a different standard! We need to weigh our lives according to the divine scale! And as we weigh ourselves on the divine scale, we will find the same words that were written on the wall in Dan. 5 apply to us- you have been weighed and found wanting!

II. Sin is Exposed

So in our second point we consider this standard by which all men will be weighed. God does not judge us based on our standards- but on His! Remember that one of the words for sin is "anomos"- literally against the law. So how are we to know about our sin- how are we to know what God thinks of our actions? Well, as QA 3 says, the Law of God tells me about my sin and misery. The Law of God reveals my inadequacy! The Law acts like a good doctor- exposing our undiagnosed disease. The law of God exposes this truth- you and I are born sinful, selfish and unrighteous. We do not measure up. To break a law of God is to sin- and since we all break God's law- we are all sinners- transgressors! We are trespassers- going where we ought not! We need to judge

ourselves by God's standards- not mans! It is God who has the right to tell us what is good and what is evil- what is right and wrong- and what pleases Him and what does not! How are we to know what God would have us do- how we should live? What mark should we aim for? Well, the mark we should aim for is the bullseye of God's law. But in reading the law, we find that we have not reached the mark! Instead of hitting the target, we are way off! We hit the dirt in the wrong direction! So the Law comes like a light and exposes the dark corners of our heart. The truth stings. But that might lead us to think- as Rom. 7:7 says- that the law is sin! Is the Law sin- is the law bad because it exposes my sin? It would be like comparing the answer sheet with a half-hearted effort of a lazy student. Is the problem with the answer sheet- or is the problem with the lazy student that got so many questions wrong? The problem is not with the Law- but with our hearts that break the law! As 7:12 says, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good! Don't blame the doctor for giving you a proper diagnosis- the problem is within- it is your heart that hates and rebels against God's standard!

And here is where we come to first use of the Law. We read the 10 commandments every week so that we might be reminded of our need- to expose our sin and misery. Jesus uses the Law to prove to us that we need Him! That we fall short on our own! If you want to know how far you have fallen, just compare your life to God's standard. Look at the arrow of your life- and then ponder the bullseye of perfect holiness and righteousness set forth in His Word! Listen to what we read from Rom. 3:20- through the Law comes knowledge of sin. Or in the negative from 7:7- if it had not been for the Law, I would not have known sin. What the law does is this- it opens our eyes. As the Spirit uses the law, we are enabled to see our sin and misery- as we compare our lives to the perfect rule and standard, we see how far off our lives really are! Or again, as 7:13 says, in order that sin might be known as sin. Apart from the law, sin remains dead. Here again, remember that Rom. 7 is teaching us by way of a diatribe or a QA format. Is the Law bad? The Law makes me see sin, and sin is bad. Would it be better to not know? Surely not- because it is not the law that makes us sin- but rather the law teaches us what sin is! We were sinners before the Law comes to us- but when the Law comes, we see what has always been true. It is like a person who was born blind. They have never seen the sun- they do not experience the sun and its light. They have no knowledge that they are living in darkness

because they have never known the light. But what if surgery could enable him to see? When the light of the Law shines, we are forced to confess the darkness in which we used to dwell. So sin is dormant before the law comes as we continue to self-justify- as we suppress the truth. The Law comes along and sin springs up because now we know the truth! Without the standard, we all think that we are good. Everyone thinks their test looks pretty good- until that test is graded- compared to a standard! When we compare ourselves to others, we do not look very bad. But when we compare ourselves to God's Law, we see our guilt. So as QA 3 says, the Law of God tells me- shows me my sin and misery. And the way in which this sin and misery is clearly seen is in the contrast between what God's law says- and what my nature does. QA 4- the summary of the Law is that we are to love God first and love our neighbor as ourselves. But what do we find in our own hearts- what is natural for man? QA 5- I am inclined to hate God and my nature. As Titus 3 said- hated and hating one another. So the contrast between the perfect law and the fallen desires of man is as stark as love to hatred- light to dark- obedience to sin.

But before we close, we have to remember why this knowledge is good news. Why do we need to know our sins and misery? Why is the Law good- desired more than honey or gold? Well, remember that the Law is used to show us our sin and misery. The good news is that God does not leave us blind, he does not leave us in our own and in our ignorance. He shows us and convinces us by the Spirit that we need a Savior! And there is a double good news here. Not only do we need a Savior, one has been provided! A savior who is perfect- the only one who has kept all of God's commandments from his youth! Although we are all law breakers, Jesus is the perfect law keeper who fulfills righteousness. By His active obedience, He earned the blessings of justification for us who are not able to keep God's laws. We missed the mark, but Jesus hit the bullseye every time! He came to do His Father's will- He came to fulfill prophecy and obey the Law! He is the perfect man- and by His obedience we have life! So as we come to the table of our Lord, rejoice in the perfect life of Christ who purchased the complete forgiveness of all your sins!