

“The ‘S’ Word”—Romans 7:10-13

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The ‘S’ Word”, is Romans 7:10-13 → *The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

When’s the last time you heard the “S” word? It is interesting that our use of such a phrase, no matter what letter you insert into it, will generate thoughts of words which are inappropriate to use in our culture for various reasons. Some words in our culture are considered vulgar, socially unacceptable, disrespectful and even anger-provoking. Many feel they should not be spoken in the presence of certain people and in certain situations. Some words are considered wrong to utter because doing so is an infraction of God’s Word from Ephesians 4:29 → *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for*

building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Some words just are not beneficial and especially do not give grace to those who hear.

However, Paul uses the “S” word throughout our text—sin. Wait . . . sin is not a vulgar, socially unacceptable word. It’s not? You’ve heard about people killing others; about extortion in businesses and corporations; about people vandalizing with no respect for the property of others; about lying, cheating, stealing, sexual immorality . . . you hear about such behaviors and many more everyday through various news feeds. Did you ever once hear anyone publicly call any such behavior sin? Of course not, because if they would use the “S” word they would have to admit that there is a God Who has revealed to them His Law, the infraction of which is sin. Then **they** would have to be accountable for their own behavior rather than someone or something else. The Christian would immediately label such behavior as sin because of what God’s says about it in our text.

Here Paul talks about both sin and death in relation to God’s law in our lives. He expresses a truth people observe everyday in themselves and others: Nobody likes to be told what to do. They do not deal with the law very well, even though the law is needed in order to protect and provide for right living in relationship with others and especially with God. Such struggle with the law is displayed in two ways:

- ① The most obvious might be outright rebellion. In the previous verses he had used the example of his sinful nature encountering the 9th & 10th Commandments which deal with coveting. He actually learned what coveting was because God's Law told him, *You shall not covet*. In what way did the commandment, which was intended to teach him how to live properly in life, actually teach him how to covet? Sin seized an opportunity which the commandment provided to rebel, thus producing in him all kinds of covetousness (cf. Romans 7:7-8). *The very commandment that promised life proved to be death* (verse 10) because the Law worked as a catalyst to bring forth rebellion and sin (i.e. disobedience to God's Law). As Paul says in verse 11 of our text: *Sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me*. In the end it brings death in relationship with God, others and even oneself when you can't figure out why you constantly make choices to "act out" in rebellion. Later, Paul himself will confess in Romans 7:15 → *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate*.
- ② The other way people do not deal with the law very well is by self-righteousness. Part of the deception to which Paul refers is your sinful nature deceiving you into thinking that you're doing a pretty good job keeping the Law. This deception is very dangerous because those who actually believe in God can think they have dealt with their

sins by their own sincere efforts and perceived obedience. Observing the rebels, they stand with the Pharisee who prayed in one of Jesus' parables, *God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers . . . I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.*

(cf. Luke 18:11-12) Ever made judgments on all those terrible people in the world? Just gotta be thankful you're not one of them, huh?

According to verse 12 of our text, *God's law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.* The depth of our sinfulness is so serious that we could come to the logical conclusion that the Law, *which is good*, has caused this *death*, this slavery to disobedience. Paul even anticipated such sinful logic in verse 13 of our text: *Did that which is good, then, bring death to me?* There we go again! Blaming the good as the cause for the evil.

It's not until God's Law drives us to the point where we cry out with the apostle Paul in Romans 7:24 → *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*—that we finally embrace the other “S” word. That's right, there's another “S” word which many people feel should not be spoken in certain contexts. It's “Savior.” One use of God's Law is to reveal to you how utterly helpless you are in sin (i.e. 2nd use as a mirror). Verse 13 of our text goes on to say: *It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment **might become sinful beyond***

measure. Please take note of the words, ***might become sinful beyond measure.*** It is only when all your deceiving defenses are thrown down and you are helpless in the wretchedness of your sin that you seek mercy and cry out: *God, be merciful to me, a sinner!* (cf. Luke 18:13) You finally see your need for a Savior and see that God has provided One—Jesus.

Galatians 3:22-26 describes this very well: *The Scripture (i.e. God's Law) imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for **in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith** in Him. This relationship of being set free from the imprisonment or slavery of sin doesn't happen by your doing. It happens completely by Jesus' perfect work completed **for you.***

Romans 7:6 says that because of Jesus' Person & Work *we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.* Obedience flows from us now as the Holy Spirit works through us even as we continue dealing with the presence of our sinful nature this side of heaven. So, what does this look like in the life of a

Christian?

Here is an example, from a very unfortunate common practice in our society today. Sally and Frank have been living together, partaking of all the privileges of a married couple, for a few years. Their reasons for not getting married range anywhere from situational convenience to resentments from the past, striving to guarantee a successful relationship in the future. Made aware of the fact that it is sin to live like a married couple without being legally married, both according to God's Law and civil law (thus, the need for a marriage license), they were plagued with guilt under the Law. Their sin deceived them, driving them into further rebellion, avoiding anything or anyone connected with the Bible, church, and so forth.

In the midst of the guilt of sin their friends and family were telling them to deal with it by going to the courthouse and getting married. Then they would no longer be "living in sin." They thought about dealing with it by splitting up, living in two separate dwellings. This didn't make much sense since they felt committed to each other in all ways. But many of their financial and situational conveniences would be lost if they were legally married. How were they going to make things right in the midst of the burden of guilt in their sin under the Law?

The reason *sin* needs to produce *death in you through what is good* (i.e. God's Law), so *sin might be shown to be sin, and through the*

commandment might become sinful beyond measure, is so you can experience true forgiveness in the only One Who can make things right in your heart. You do not make sin forgiven or your behavior right by your own obedience to God’s Law. Rather, that Law will drive you to see the true nature of all sin—idolatry. It’s a worship of self. It brings you to cry out, *God, be merciful to me, a sinner . . . period!* And then, God gives you Jesus, bringing you into His family, making you His loved child by grace through faith in what Jesus did to blot out your sins so God remembers them no more (cf. Isaiah 43:25). You then act as members of God’s family, not outsiders who need an appointed guardian. Then you will live in obedience to God not to be forgiven or make things right but rather because you’re already forgiven in Jesus. For instance, Frank & Sally will get married because they are already at peace with God in Christ—not to make peace with God or their consciences or other people. Obedience flows from a different motivation—the Gospel.

There are some other letters which the world recognizes should only be used in certain situations. A group of such letters is “SOS.” They are simply call letters put together as a general plea for “help” in distressful situations. I use them as well to described our cry for help in our distressful situation in sin. The first “S” stands for “shows.” The “O” stands for “our.” The last “S” reveals what Paul speaks about in our text:

The Law . . . **S**hows . . . **O**ur . . . **S**in

so that

The Gospel can . . . **Show . . . Our . . . Savior, Jesus.**

It is a **constant** call for help in faith to our heavenly Father as His dear children in Christ. Amen.

There is therefore now no condemnation

for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the Spirit of life

has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

(Romans 8:1-2)

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