

## EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

### Message #25

### Romans 7:7-12

**I believe that one of the most dangerous threats to the believer, one which we must pray never gets a foothold in our lives, is the danger of not recognizing our own sin.** We need to understand that our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9) and are capable of covering and lying and deceiving ourselves about our own sin. If we do not stay close to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, our conscience can become very calloused when it comes to sin. There are criminals who have done terrible evil things who are so hardened in their hearts they do not think they have done one thing wrong. They sit in prison having convinced themselves they are innocent. There was a time when John Newton was trading slaves and saw nothing wrong with it. There was a time when George Whitefield accepted slaves for an orphanage in Georgia and never thought anything was wrong. There was a time when Paul persecuted and killed Christians and was not convicted that it was wrong. It is true that eventually these named came to see their sin for what it was, but that was not always true.

Christian people can become complacent and comfortable with themselves and at the same time be steeped in sin. It is possible for a Christian to verbally murder his brother and sister in Christ week after week and never be convicted that it is wrong. It is possible for a believer to be so driven by lust that he no longer views those lusts as evil but just part of his daily routine. It is possible for a believer to be at peace with himself or herself and never sense the evil of the gossip or the greed or the lying or the jealousy or the envy or the hate.

Sin is your deadly enemy and unless you spot it and deal with it, it can pick you off like a sharpshooter when you least expect it. It can draw you like a magnet to its attraction. It can be like a seducing temptress that can lure you away. It can be like a logical lawyer, presenting seemingly good arguments to offer as your defense. Sin can come after you using guerrilla tactics, sneaking in behind the scenes. It is like an engineer who can construct elaborate traps and when it finally captures you, sin is like an army that occupies your morality. Sin is a deadly foe and it is out to rob us of everything God wants.

When it comes to facing our own sin or dealing with our own guilt, there are basically two things we can do:

1. We can deal with it directly and honestly before God.
2. We can deal with it defensively by excusing it within ourselves.

People have a tendency to blame others for their sin.

- 1) Adam was a victim ... he blamed Eve (Genesis 3:11-12).
- 2) Eve was a victim ... she blamed Satan (Genesis 3:13).
- 3) Cain was a victim ... he blamed ignorance (Genesis 4:9).
- 4) In James' day, some believers were victims and blamed their circumstances that had been ordained by God (James 1:13-14).
- 5) In Paul's day, some believers were victims and blamed God's Word.

## **ALTHOUGH GOD’S LAW DOES SHOW US OUR SIN, GOD’S LAW CANNOT BE BLAMED FOR OUR SIN.**

There are no victims when it comes to sin. We have all sinned, we have all gone astray and we are all guilty. There is no point running from all this for this is reality.

Now the basis for Paul’s discussion is found in the first part of **verse 7**. Paul says, “May we never dare accuse God’s Word or God’s Law of being the reason for our sin problem.”

He is going to set forth three main theological purposes of the Law:

### **THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE #1 – The Law gives us knowledge of our own sin. 7:7b**

The Greek word “know” is one that means to have understanding. The idea is that the Law of God gives us an understanding of when and how we sin.

The Law of God sets the boundaries for us as to what is right and wrong according to God’s holy standards. Giving knowledge to us about something and being the source of something are two different things.

Apparently, one of the real areas of personal struggle for Paul was in the area of coveting (7:7-8). That word “covet” is one that means to have a passionate longing or desire for something. When it is used in connection with the Ten Commandments, it refers to a passionate longing or desire for something that someone else has that we do not have.

Back when I was in elementary and middle school, there was a mandate that said you were not to chew gum or have gum at school. As soon as this law went into effect, several of us decided to form a gum smuggling ring. In total defiance of an authority the Bible says I am to submit to, I used my locker as a place to store gum and finally one day I got busted. Now what in the world made me want to smuggle gum into school? I don’t even like gum. It was the law that said you shall not have any gum. The law gave us knowledge that this is wrong and we did it any way. If you want evidence for your total depravity, take an honest look at your own life. When the Law says “thou shalt” we say, “no we won’t.” When the law says “thou shall not” we say “yes we will.” The law gives us knowledge of our sin nature and our sin.

### **THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE #2 – The Law brought our own sin to life. 7:8**

The word “opportunity” is a military term. When war broke out, the Romans would establish some spot as a military base for their operations. It was this place that became the headquarters of all military activity. Paul is saying this - God’s commandments are the base headquarters for revealing sin. Apart from the Law sin was dead in that it was not clearly identifiable.

There is a powerful illustration from history from the life of the famed theologian, Augustine, who tells this story in his *Confessions*. Augustine said that one time he and a group of his friends decided to go to a neighbor's field at night to steal pears. He said they went into the field and shook the pear tree and a large quantity fell to the ground and they gathered them up and carried them away. He said they ate a few of them and threw a bunch of them to some pigs. Now Augustine later reflected on this and asked himself why he actually stole the pears. He said it wasn't the beauty of the pear that prompted him to do it, even though they had been beautifully created by God. He said it wasn't his hunger that prompted him to do it because he wasn't even hungry when he did it. He said part of the reason was he and his buddies were in it together, but he actually wondered why he would think stealing pears would be a good thing to do. He said my conclusion was I stole those pears because I wanted to steal. I knew of a command that said, you shall not steal, and it stirred in me the desire to be a thief (*Confessions*, pp. 47-53).

If we want to see how depraved we really are, read the O.T. Law of God and then take an honest journey through your own life. We will either see that we were drawn to do some of the most sinful things or we will admit we have already done them.

Now of course, the purpose for bringing our sin to life is to bring us to the cross (Galatians 3:19-22). The Law brought our sin to life so we would realize why God brought His Son to die.

### **THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE #3 – The Law brought us the reality of death. 7:9-11**

The basic essence of these verses is this - through the Law came the reality that we were dead before God.

Now we may notice in **7:9a** that Paul says he “was once alive apart from the Law.”

- 1) He was physically alive before he knew the religious Law.
- 2) He was religiously alive before he knew what the Law meant.
- 3) He was spiritually alive before he knew the real purpose of the Law.

No man on earth knew the O.T. Law better than the Apostle Paul (Philippians 3:5-6). Paul knew the words of the Law. He had memorized them. What he did not know was how the Law worked (bringing sin and death). In fact, Paul actually believed he could keep the Law. But he did not know the Law was actually condemning him making him guilty before God.

Acts 9:1-4 takes place around A.D. 35. We may notice that shortly after his conversion, Paul starts telling people that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah (Acts 9:20, 22). However, about ten years later we come to Acts 13:38-39. Paul is still talking about Jesus Christ, but his message is different - now he is discussing justification and the Law.

If we turn to Galatians 1:12-18, we learn that during his three year course in theology, Jesus Christ personally taught him concerning righteousness and the Law and it was during this time that Paul came to the full realization that the Law left him dead before God. He finally came to the point years after his salvation where he realized the real purpose of the Law.

**Conclusion #1** - The Law is just as holy, sacred and pure as God. **7:12a**

**Conclusion #2** - The commandments are holy - just as sacred and pure as God. **7:12b**

**Conclusion #3** - The commandments are just - they meet God's righteous standards. **7:12c**

**Conclusion #4** - The commandments are good - there is nothing bad or wrong with any of God's commandments. **7:12d**

I want you to carefully notice **verse 11**. Sin is out to deceive you. It will promise you that if you sin it will satisfy you this time more than last time, which is a deceptive lie. It will promise you that no one will ever see or know what you did, which is another lie. It will promise you that there will be no consequences you will need to worry about, which is another lie. Sin is out to trick you into thinking that it is just okay. But don't you believe it for one second.

But perhaps the most deceptive thing that sin will do to people is to try to convince them that they may be right with a Holy God by their works. If you actually expect to get before God and have Him judge you as righteous based on your works, you have been deceived and you need to take a serious, honest look at the Law, because you are being duped to believe that the Law is your salvation when in fact it is your condemnation. It shows we are guilty and if you will admit this and then believe totally and only on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you shall be saved.