

# Actual Sin

Romans 7:7-25 Mark 7:1-23

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I'm sure you have heard of the term “*Vicious Cycle*”? Its term that means that a series of negative events occur that reinforce each other and generate even more negative results and consequences. In other words, *its one trouble that leads to another!* Maybe you have said it like this: “*When it rains, it pours!*”

“*Vicious cycle*” is an appropriate description of sin in our lives! **Sin leads to guilt which causes shame that can lead to lies that will lead to other sins** – sin is a *vicious cycle* in our lives --- it's like a never ending loop of negative things that we can never break free from on our own. And when it is finally finished, it leads to death. **In fact, sin is more than a vicious cycle, it is a deadly cycle.**

In theology, the sins that we commit are called *Actual sins*. You *actually sin* in thoughts, words, and deeds. *Actual sins* are the fruit of **Original sin**. **Original sin** is the sin that you were conceived in; you inherited Adam's sin, it's guilt, and its punishment<sup>1</sup>. **Original sin** leaves you totally and thoroughly corrupt and depraved<sup>2</sup>. You are born with a sinful nature that hates God and loves rebellion and immorality. This **Original sin** is the root sin that leads to all the sins you commit. The sins that you commit are called *Actual sins*.

St Paul was talking about *Actual sins* today in our Scripture lesson from Romans 7. As we read this, remember that **Original Sin leads to Actual Sins**.

<sup>18</sup>I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Romans 7:18-19

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<sup>1</sup> As Conservative Lutherans, we confess the truth of Original Sin like this in the Book of Concord: “[Lutherans] teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with [evil desires]; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.” Augsburg Confession II.1-2

“Original sin is not only the entire absence of all good in spiritual, divine things, but that, instead of the lost image of God in man, it is at the same time also a deep, wicked, horrible, fathomless, inscrutable, and unspeakable corruption of the entire nature and all its powers.” Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration 1.11

<sup>2</sup> This reflects how Scriptures teaches us to understand ourselves in light of sin. See Romans 3:1-20 and/or Mark 7:20-23, for instance. The Law of God is harsh; it is meant to jar you into repentance; to wake you up to the seriousness of sin and your desperate need for a Savior.

This struggle that St Paul talks about, and every one of us knows from experience, is that *vicious and deadly cycle of sin*.

The Bible gives us some “word pictures” to help us understand what actual sins are, and their danger. Let’s take a look at four of them today. **Each of these word pictures are to be understood in the context of the 10 Commandments.**

**One** of the word pictures for sin is “**missing the mark**<sup>3</sup>”. The word picture is that of an archer who’s arrow flies wayward and misses the target. God has set the *10 Commandments* as your target, and because of sin, you miss the target like a wayward arrow. In fact, you never, not even once, hit the target. Every single time you miss the mark and sin. “**Missing the mark**” means that your life is not lined up with God's Will nor His Ten Commandments.

A **second** word picture that Scripture uses to describe your sin is “**breaking a command**<sup>4</sup>.” It has the idea of “*passing over a set limit*” --- today we would say that you have “*stepped out of bounds*.” God has set the *10 Commandments* as boundaries around your life for you to live, and when you sin, you step over those boundaries; you step *out of bounds*. Just like in any sport, when you are out of bounds, there is a penalty. The penalty for stepping *out of bounds* in sin is death.

A **third** word picture that God uses to teach us about sin is the word “**trespass**<sup>5</sup>” The word picture is that of someone falling on something; *it means to fall down, to stumble and injure oneself*. When you sin, you are stumbling over the *10 Commandments*. You trip and you fall. We all have cuts, scrapes, bruises, and deep wounds from tripping and stumbling over God’s *10 Commandments*.

A **fourth** word picture that helps us to understand our sin is “**disobedience**<sup>6</sup>”. This is a failure to listen. Like children who fail to listen to their parents, we fail to listen to God’s *10 Commandments* and we disobey. Your Heavenly Father has given you the

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned ---

<sup>4</sup> Romans 5:14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 5:18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

10 Commandments to keep you safe in this life; but you do not listen and you disobey every time you sin and go against His Commands.

## Original Sin --> leads to --> Actual Sins

*"It is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come"*

Mark 7:21

All of these word pictures, **missing the mark like an archer**, **stepping out of bounds**, **falling and stumbling**, and **disobedience** teach us about sin in the context of the 10 Commandments. We all do these things on a daily basis --- no one is exempt. Like St Paul, **the good we want to do we don't do and the evil we don't want to do, we do.** Original sin leads to all the actual sins in our lives.

**THANKFULLY GOD KNOWS THAT** --- and He sees that we are in a vicious and deadly cycle of sin that we cannot escape. So He does something about it! **He sent Jesus not only to die for you, but also to live a perfect life for you.**

We usually think of Jesus dying on a cross for us – and rightly so. But another important aspect of salvation is that Jesus lived a **perfect life** for you. God considers you to be holy and righteous because Jesus lived a holy, righteous and perfect life for you. In faith, His holy, righteous and perfect life is credited to you. In God's eyes, it's as if you have lived the holy, righteous and perfect life. God does not see your sins, He does not count them against you; rather He chooses to see Christ's Righteousness instead.

The Bible uses the word "credit" to help us understand this.

However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is **credited** as righteousness. Romans 4:5

The word "**credit**" is a banking term that means to transfer funds from one account to another<sup>7</sup>. It is a word picture where God has transferred Christ's holy, righteous and perfect life to your account, and your sin, guilt, and shame have been transferred to Christ's account. The word is used 11 times in Romans 4! It is a powerful Gospel image! **When God looks at your account, He does not see your sin, but He sees Christ's righteousness that has been credited to you through faith!**

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the **righteousness of God.** 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>7</sup> The Greek word for "Credit" is used 11 times in Romans 4 to describe how we are righteous in God's eyes. It is a banking / accounting word that means "To enter into an account book"; to "reckon to one's account". Synonyms include count, impute, and reckon. In Romans 4, God the Father "credits" your account with Christ's righteousness through faith. Righteousness is always 'imputed' to you from God, **not** "infused" in you as you become righteous.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:22

Righteousness is given to you, it is **not** something *within* you!

I am sure you heard the term “**Robe of Righteousness**”? This phrase teaches us that righteousness is not found *inside* you, but rather it is given to you! It is outside of you and put on you, *like wearing a robe*.

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness Isaiah 61:10

Righteousness is not anything that you can do on your own. **Remember, Original Sin totally and thoroughly corrupts you so that all you can do is actually sin!** Jesus' righteousness is given to you! It is a free gift of salvation!

**God's answer to the sin in your life is to give you the Righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ through faith.**

God no longer sees your sin; your sin no longer separates you from God. Rather you belong to God, and He considers you holy, righteous and perfect! **Think about yourself in this way!**

That Righteousness of Christ then *influences* everything you do. You begin to live a righteous and holy life; you think, speak, and do God pleasing things.

- You begin to *hit the mark* of the 10 Commandments;
- you begin to live your life *within the boundaries* God has set for you;
- you *no longer stumble and fall* over every temptation that comes your way;
- you begin to you begin *to listen and obey* God's Word.

Because of the Righteousness of Jesus Christ,

- ⇒ you learn to fear, love and trust in God above all things
- ⇒ you are patient and kind to the people in your life
- ⇒ You trust God through the struggles that you face and learn to patiently endure hardships and difficulties
- ⇒ you know that God cares about you and is at work for good in everything that happens in your life

Because of the Righteousness of Jesus Christ, you start to live a righteous and holy life!

Sin might be a vicious and deadly cycle in your life; but Christ rescues you from that through His holy, righteous and perfect life that He lived for you and in your place.

**That Righteousness of Christ is a free gift of faith  
And the Righteousness Christ influences everything you do!**

AMEN!

**Holy Spirit, we thank you that you work  
repentance in our lives.**

**Help us to hate sin and to love  
righteousness.**

**Allow us to turn from our sin and to trust in  
Jesus for forgiveness.**

**According to your power and grace, lead us  
to live lives of holiness and righteousness;  
lives that abide in Christ, glorify our Father,  
obey your commands, and serve our  
neighbor.**

**We pray this in Jesus' Name, Who is our  
righteousness,  
Amen!**

## Romans 7:7-25

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”[b] 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from the 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. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.[c] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

## Mark 7:1-23

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus 2 and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) 5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” 6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’

8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

9 And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ 11 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— 12 then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. 13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

14 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. 15 Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” 17 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. 18 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? 19 For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) 20 He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. 21 For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person.