

Easter Sunday
April 21st, 2019
Pastor Matthew Ude

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 NKJ ⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we live under the law we will receive the wages of sin which is death, but if live in Christ we receive the gift of God which is everlasting life.

But what does this mean to live under the law?

One way in which people choose to live under the law is that they think they can handle it themselves. That they don't really need Jesus.

How often doesn't it happen that someone is raised in the faith, but when they are older they think: I know all those stories. I know that Jesus died for me. I don't really need to go to church. I don't really need daily devotions.

Or maybe even they do come to church but that is something for Sundays. And their daily life they think they can handle by themselves.

In either case the same thing happens, slowly little by little things go wrong. They start to slide backwards. One day they wake up and our life is a deep dark pit from which there is no way out. And as long as we keep trying to fix it ourselves there is no hope of getting out.

King David knew this feeling well. He talks about being in the bottom of a pit with all his bones broken.

Yet in the next verse David looks up from that deep darkness and rejoices to see the face of His Savior peering over the pit.

As long as we try to dig our own way out we will only sink further in, but when we look up and turn to Christ, when we remember his victory over death. No matter how deep the pit we have gotten ourselves into we have victory through Him.

Or again to live under the law means that we observe and do all those commands and instructions which God has ordained, do this, and do that, and do this other thing and don't do that. So much so that if try to do even the least of these commands we are over whelmed.

For example we talked last summer about being a good father. And what does God's word say? Make sure to set a good example, make sure to teach them the word of God, punish them but don't be too strict, don't provoke them to wrath, make sure you spend time with, that you get to know them, but also make sure you work hard to provide for them.

Now on top of that be a good husband, now on top of that be a good neighbor, now on top of that make sure you are a good member of your church and so on and so forth.

Now what can we say to all these things except I cannot possibly do all of them. It is no wonder than that many of those who seek to fulfill the law run away to a cave and live as hermits. No doubt they think that if they remove from their lives all of these responsibilities then maybe they can keep the other commands that God has given them. Yet even hermits if they listen to the law will find it is too much for anyone to bear.

Paul refers to the law as, "**a yoke . . . which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear**" (Acts 15:10)

But we have victory though our Lord Jesus Christ who has removed the punishment which the law held over us, namely death.

Oh to be sure the Law is still there as a guide to teach us what is good and what is bad, but it has no punishment, or as Paul says it has no sting. The threat of the law is death, yet we have life in Christ Jesus. Therefore we can hear the law and we can try to do what it says, yet without despair because even when we fail we are forgiven and still have life in Christ.

Or we could say that living under the law means that we must keep a careful count of every sin that is done to us or that we do for one another. Because the power of the law is sin, just as the power of capitalism is money.

When you live in a capitalist society as we do, it is important to keep track of every dollar, because that is the means by which you get what you deserve. In the same way those who live under the law must keep a careful account of every sin they have done or that was done to them.

But now Christ died and rose again, and the fact that he rose means that God has accepted his sacrifice as a payment for all sins.

So it is as if you woke up one morning and money was meaningless, and every store you went to said simply, "take what you want." So that now there is no need to worry about your bank account. No need to care about what is owed to you or what you owe.

So now we are free also from worrying what we owe to God and what we think others owe to us. Because the sting of death is gone. Because the victory is already ours in Christ Jesus.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and if Christ is risen from the dead death is defeated, and if death is defeated, the law has no power over us.

Therefore we sing with Paul and with all the saints in heaven and on earth, **"thanks be to God who has given us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."**

Amen