

What Is Sin?

What Does the Bible Teach?

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We are coming to a particularly important topic for our ongoing series about what we believe as a church. We have been taking kind of a systematic look at the Bible's teaching on all of theology and we've been asking and answering some of the most foundational questions that there are in all of life. "Why do we believe the Bible? Who is God? What is the Trinity?" Last week, we asked and answered the question, "Who are you?" by which we mean, "What is man?" And we asked that after we had addressed the question, "Who is Satan?" and realized that there is a living evil being that is opposed to our spiritual being, that actively seeks to bring men into hell with his final destination. So what I want you to see as we kind of approach our topic here this morning is that the Bible teaches for keeps that the gospel is a matter of eternal significance and nothing else matters by comparison. Whether we enjoy earthly prosperity or not, whether we enjoy physical health or not, whether people like us or not, the only thing that ultimately matters is whether we've been washed in the blood of Christ or not because that is the final determining factor of whether our eternal destiny will go well for us or whether it will go bad for us. And the reason that we emphasize these things as opposed to promoting self-help philosophies or something like this, is because we understand that the Bible teaches these things. First and foremost, we want to honor and be faithful to what God says in his word but at the end of the day, on a human-to-human, on a horizontal level, we want it to go well for you on the day of judgment. We want you to be in heaven with us and that means that we teach these things that might be popular in today's society. We don't care what men think about what we teach; we don't care what the unsaved think or the criticisms that people might direct at biblical teaching. We care about the future of your soul. That's what matters.

That's what's going to count on the final day and so as we care about your soul and as the Bible teaches and calls us and appeals to us to come to Christ, we have to confront the question that is in front of us today. Why is it that we wouldn't just automatically all go to heaven? Why is it that we even need the gospel? Why is it that Christ shed his blood as a lamb on the cross? Why is it that that sacrifice took place 2,000 years ago? Well, you start to understand when you ask and answer the question: what is sin? What is sin? And for those of you that weren't with us last time and there were a lot that weren't able to attend because of the weather and travel and all of that, last week we answered the question: who are you? What is man? And we saw something really critical and

foundational that is one of the perhaps slightly under-reported aspects of biblical doctrine. God appointed man, God appointed the human race as the pinnacle of his creation, to rule over creation. It can be said of man and man alone, not of animals, not of any other aspect of creation that man was created in the image of God and that man was appointed for the purpose of reflecting something of the image of his Creator, something of the image of her Creator and that we as the human race, enjoy a particularly privileged place of priority and privilege in the creation. God gave that to us as a gift; we have our physical lives as a gift from God. The Bible says that in him we live and move and have our being. He pours out goodness and blessing upon good men and evil men alike, "The rain falls on the good and the unjust alike." And man enjoys this privilege from a good and gracious God and has been given a dignified position in the order of creation and you and I share in that human nature. It's not what distinguishes us from one another that makes us eternally significant, what makes us eternally significant is what we share in common as members of the human race.

Here's what I want to draw to your attention here this morning as we kind of bring last week's message as the framing context for today's message. Think with me, the nature of God: good and righteous and merciful and holy; he is true; he is loving as Elizabeth sang so beautifully and reminded us of; he providentially cares even for sparrows and for the hairs of our head; the very nature of the goodness of God and the dignified position that he gave to us as members of the human race should have a consequence. It should be that if everything was right in the universe, it would be and it should be that man would worship God in response. It would be and should be that man would worship God out of love for God's goodness to him and out of a proper response of gratitude for having been given such a dignified place in the order of the universe. We recognize the position: day by day we eat and we breathe and we enjoy so many blessings and human love and all manner of things even apart from the spiritual blessings that we enjoy as Christians. God has been so profoundly good to the human race that man should worship him in grateful response. That's what should happen.

To worship God for his inherent, intrinsic worth as the holy Creator of all. To give worship as the creature back to the Creator. That's what should happen. That's what should be going on for the past several thousands of years since God put Adam and Eve in the Garden. There should be, by all rights, a grateful worshipful loving response from man to God and yet the history of man is exactly the opposite of what it should be. Think about it: from Adam's rebellion in the Garden of Eden, through Israel's rebellion in the Old Testament for thousands of years, through the murder of Jesus Christ at Calvary, through the persecution of Christ's true disciples for 2,000 subsequent years, through the endless and multiplied variations of false religion and the systematic exclusion of God's name in modern society, the human race has stubbornly defied its Creator and said, "We will not have this God reign over us."

Beloved, that is a cosmic crime of incalculable proportions. This is so wrong. How did it ever get to this place? How could the recipients of such unfeigned goodness rebel against the one who is pouring it out on them day by day? How could this happen? What would explain such ingratitude and rebellion against a good and gracious Creator? How can you

possibly explain that? Those of you who are parents, not that I have this particular problem myself from my own six children, but those of you who are parents who have experienced the rebellion of children against you despite your desire to love and bless them and as they've gotten older and they've just turned against you, you know the kind of grief that I'm talking about. You say, "It shouldn't be this way. I love you. Why are you doing this?" And the pain and the heartbreak of that is almost unbearable. To receive evil for good. To receive rebellion for kindness over a lifetime. That's not right at all, is it? We understand that on a human level; we sympathize with it on a human level. Well, let's multiply it by infinity to perfection of a holy God and his goodness on the human race and we say this is all wrong. This is a cosmic crime. How can we ever explain this condition?

So our duty this morning is to answer the question: what is sin? Let me give you a definition of sin that is not meant to be perfectly technical but just gives us a sense of what we're talking about here today and then we'll unpack it as we go along. I'll read this a couple of times so those of you that are taking notes can get it down. Sin is any personal failure to conform to God's law or his moral character. Let me say that again, I'm not done yet. Sin is any personal failure to conform to God's law or his moral character and finds its root in inexcusable ingratitude for God's goodness and love. Just reading that definition breaks my heart and it defines it in relationship to God's law, God's character and God's love. When men sin, all of those aspects of the perfection of God are being violated. So let me just give you this definition one more time. Sin is any personal failure to conform to God's law or his moral character and finds its root in inexcusable ingratitude for God's goodness and love.

If we are to understand the present order that we are now living in, it is imperative to get to the roots of this situation and to be prepared to take responsibility for our contribution to the overall condition. Turn in your Bibles to Romans 1 as a starting point. We're really not going to expound this passage but we just need a starting point to kind of frame things for us here this morning. As we go through these passages together this morning, beloved, I want to ask you for a favor: I want you to repeatedly be thinking about this content from the perspective of God. It's not that God is so wounded in his feelings that he can't bear the hurt that man has caused to him, that's not the point at all. But I want you to think about it from the perspective of who God is and what he has done for man and the blessings that he continues to shower upon the human race despite the rebellion. We need to think about this from God's perspective if we're going to understand where we stand in relationship to all of it. Let's think about it from God's perspective for an hour here this morning.

Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks," do you see it there? They did not honor him as God or give thanks "but they became

futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” We'll stop there. You see that from this passage that mankind is existing in the realm of the reserved wrath of God for all of its unrighteousness and ungodliness. Actually, the sequence it goes the other way: the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Ungodliness toward God, unrighteousness in our human relationships and in our personal demeanor. The Bible says that this a culpable condition, that mankind is not a passive victim of his circumstances; he's not a passive victim of what people have done to him in the past; that for each one of us there is a culpability. There is a culpability in sin that comes from being able to somehow look at everything around, to look at the creation around, and stick our fingers, our collective fingers in our ears and says, “I don't see God here.” That's inexcusable. Of course you see it, it's all around. It's not just that you should see it, it's that God, Scripture says, has clearly made it evident to them.

So, the refusal to acknowledge the existence of a Creator, the refusal to give thanks, is a deliberate suppression of known truth by the human conscience or by the human will maybe would be a better way to put it. The conscience testifies against this act of deliberate insubordination. Look at verse 19, “that which is known about God is evident within them.” It's inside. They know within because God made it evident to them. Verse 20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” It's clear. It's evident. It is obvious. So, beloved, speaking about the human race in general here this morning: it is absolutely inexcusable that worship and gratitude does not come back from the human race toward its Creator. There is no excuse for that. It is so obvious that God made us. It is so obvious that there is a powerful Creator made known in what he has made and Scripture says it is a deliberate suppression of truth that men find themselves in this condition.

Those of you that are here today that are not Christians, I speak to you gently but I speak to the agreement and to the testimony of your own conscience to the rightness of what I'm about to say. Those of you that are rejecting Christ here in this room this morning, those of you who are pursuing a life of sin, you are doing it against the testimony of your own conscience. God has made it clear to you and there is no excuse for your stubborn defiance of the testimony of your own inner conscience as well as what is all about you to say nothing about those of you who are here under the teaching of the word of God week by week. Oh, oh, how awful the judgment is going to be upon you if you don't repent. I can't bear the thought of it but I have to warn you and tell you that this is what Scripture testifies to.

Look at verse 21 here because it kind of in a negative way shows what should be happening and is the basis for part of the definition that I gave you. “For even though they knew God,” this was obvious to them even though they suppressed it, “they did not honor Him as God or give thanks.” Scripture puts ingratitude at the very heart motivation of sin. So, beloved, when we consider the question, “What is sin?” what I want you to see is this: we're obviously talking about something that goes far deeper than our external behavior. It's more than what we dress; it's more than what we say. But there's a very core defining principle of how we view God and respond to him that is at the core of sin. The

refusal to submit. The refusal to worship. The refusal to give thanks to him can only be a hard-hearted, deliberate, stubborn rejection of that which is obvious.

This is sobering. This is what we need to consider. I'm going to give you four statements to help you kind of progressively go from the external to the internal about sin and be able to put this together in a way that sticks in our minds hopefully. First of all, I'm going to give you four statements about sin to help you recognize the vileness of sin so that those of us who are Christians would be even more devoted to turning away from it and those of you that don't know Christ here today, that the Spirit of God would somehow, we ask once again, dear Lord, once again we ask that you would use your word to convict those who have yet to bow the knee to Christ. 1. Sin includes your disobedient acts. Sin includes your disobedient acts. I'm not sure how my enunciation is going today so sometimes I'll spell something for you to make sure we don't miss it.

What is sin? Well, at one level we could say when God commands something not to be done and you do it anyway, that is sin and for that let's turn to the book of Exodus 20 and just take a quick look at some of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20, the law of God. The moral law of God expressing his will for what men should be like delivered first to Israel in the Old Testament, repeated again in the New Testament, directed to Jews and Gentiles alike. When God commands something not to be done and you do it anyway, that is sin. Exodus 20, let's pick it up in verse 13. I'm being random here and starting in the middle of the Decalogue. "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Okay, we'll stop there. I'm just making a very simple point now, reminding you of that which you already know. I understand that but from a perspective of a physical act: a physical act of murder; a physical act of adultery; a physical act of theft; a spoken false word, a lie is sin. God said, "Don't do that." And somewhere along the line man says, "I will do that." It's a direct defiance. It's a direct rebellion against the spoken command of God.

External acts. That's the way people tend to think about sin and that's one right way to think about sin but it's hardly exhaustive. We often forget that sin can be passive. This is really important because many of us can say, "Well, I've never done those outward physical acts so I must be okay." No, not according to the testimony of Scripture, it doesn't work that way. Listen to me carefully please: God not only prohibits certain conduct like we just read, he also requires positive conduct as well. It's not just avoiding certain acts of evil, God commands positive things to come out of our lives. So, for example, we're just choosing things, you could open the Bible at random and find support for what we're saying here. But think about it this way. Matthew 6:33, you don't have to turn there, most of you know that verse anyway, a nice little chorus that's put these words of Scripture to music. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness." Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded that to seek first as your first priority, the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God.

Now, beloved, do you realize what that means? That requires active devotion. That requires you to actually do something. It requires you to desire something in your heart and then to go after it. And so, so that means that your indifference to God's

righteousness is sin even if you are not openly hostile toward him. You may not be a flaming atheist. You may not be someone who comes up on this stage and debates and argues in favor of evolution and proclaims false philosophies but that doesn't mean that you're okay. Even if you are not openly hostile to God, if you are indifferent to him, if you just don't care, you are sinning greatly against the word of Christ who said, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness," as the number one priority of your life. If loving Christ and seeking him is not the number one priority of life, ah beloved, you're in such a miserable condition of sin I don't know how to help you, in one respect.

Sin includes the way that you act but that's positive and negative. Here's a way to help you think about that that we can all relate to, those of us who have ever had a job and even you kids that have been told by your parents to do something and not to do something. Yeah, you can think about it that way, you guys that are 8, 9, 10, 12, 14 years old, you can think about it this way. Your parents have rules for things that you are not to do and you have things that you are supposed to do. Well, it's not enough for you to be obedient to your parents, to simply not do what they say not to do. If they give you tasks that you're supposed to do and you say, "I'm not gonna do them," that's sinful. If they say don't do that and you do it, that's sinful. Your parents get you coming and going, kids. This is kind of tough. For those of us that are adults, it works the same way in the real world. Most employees have some manner of written or understood job description which requires certain tasks to be performed on the job. It's not enough for an employee simply not to do what his employer tells him not to do. He has to positively do his job if he wants to keep his job. If he fails to do the job requirements, he'll get fired.

So it is in the spiritual realm. God not only says, "Don't do this," he says, "Do this." We have dual responsibilities in our response to the God who created us and it's bad enough that people do what he prohibits, it's equally bad, sometimes in many ways worse if they don't do what he calls them to do. We live, we walk through life under an obligation to respond to the commands of God. Those commands are positive and negative. And yet, so as we understand this a little bit, we're not giving this nearly the attention that it deserves, and yet, beloved, think: think of how you used to talk before you were a Christians; think about interactions that you've had with unbelievers or that you've seen in videos and things like that. How often when someone is asked, "Do you think you'll go to heaven?" They'll say, "Yeah, I'm pretty sure." "Why do you think that?" "Well, I've never killed anyone. I'm not a Hitler or a Mussolini or anything like that." By this human comparison they seek to establish their own righteousness as that which would entitle them to an eternal blessedness with God throughout all of eternity. That is insipid. That's foolishness. That's not the question at all. The question is: have you loved God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind throughout all of your life? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ without reservation? Have you turned to him and submitted to him? If you haven't you're a sinner of highest degree.

You see, it couldn't possibly be when we would stop and think about it, it couldn't possibly be that righteousness is established by what we don't do. None of you in marriage would want to live that way, to have a spouse who never did anything for you, never said anything to you but just avoided doing bad things. You want positive things

out of your relationship as well. No one would live that way and yet that's what is projected on God is what he requires and he's accused of unfairness if he doesn't deal with us that way. You see don't you that the problem is not with the holy Creator, it's that we're so biased and warped in our own favor that we'll say and do anything that excuses ourselves from an obligation of worship, gratitude and obedience. Shame on us as a human race.

So, as we answer this question: what is sin? Sin includes all disobedient acts toward God understanding that this kind of disobedience that we're talking about here in this first point can be active or passive. Now, that's enough to convict us all but if you think more deeply about it, you're going to realize something pretty quickly and you're certainly going to see this if you read Scripture on any consistent basis. There must be something more to sin than simply our external conduct or lack thereof. There has to be something more to it than that. Why would we disobey like this? Why is it that that's what motivates us? Why is it that we're not motivated by gratitude? Why is it that sin comes so naturally to the unbeliever? Well, 2. Sin includes your disobedient attitudes. Sin includes your disobedient attitudes and Scripture makes this so very clear. You see, beloved, our sin is more than what we do or don't do. It's far more than that. The Bible defines sin in terms of our thoughts, our attitudes and even our motives. It's not just about external conduct. God, Scripture says, looks on the heart. We're all laid bare before him with whom we have to live and do.

I think that you're still in Exodus 20 and I believe that probably the most overlooked and neglected of the Ten Commandments is the last one, certainly the man on the street has not thought adequately about the implications of the tenth of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:17. Look at it with me. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." You see, God earlier had commanded certain things not to do, he said don't do these deeds but then at the end, he says, "You shall not even desire them in your heart. You shall not even want this," and that points out a couple of things. First of all, God is the maker of both the material and the immaterial side of man. He made both the outside and the inside of man, therefore beloved, he rules as Lord over both the outside and the inside of man. God rules over the internal aspects of our heart. He claims dominion there in the realm of your desires and he says, "You shall not have wicked desires in your heart." "God, just bring the full weight of the law down and crush me." I can fool men but God sees my heart. He sees your heart. What this helps us to see is the reason that our conduct, passive and active, is not what it should be, is that our hearts are not producing the right kind of fruit. What you are on the outside is a dusty image of what you are on the inside.

Sinful acts come from sinful attitudes found in the human heart. Look over at Mark 7. You could almost view this as Jesus' commentary on the tenth commandment because Jesus reinforced and said these same things. He said it in Matthew 5 that lust was sinful in addition to adultery; that anger was sinful in addition to murder. We could have gone there but we're just going to go to Mark 7:20, Jesus said, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed," see

it there? It's from this heart that this stuff bubbles over. It's because the fountain inside of man is polluted, the polluted water comes out, that a polluted life comes out of a polluted heart. Jesus said, "Out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

You see, Scripture teaches us that when you see external sin, you know that internal sin has come first. When sharp, angry, profane words come out of your mouth whether they recognize it or not, people are seeing a window into what's going on in your heart at that time. Those things don't occur out of a heart of neutrality, that stuff comes out of our lives because it's going on in our hearts and so your mouth is displaying what's going on inside you. Looked at from a different direction, we can see and understand and those of us that have grown up in the church or those of us that participate week by week, month by month by month, take yourself in hand and deal with yourself on this point that Scripture makes it very clear that things can look good on your outside and yet be very dark and sick on the inside and it doesn't matter if you're fooling people with your external conduct, beloved. If your heart is sinful, you are in a position of sin and you are in the realm of the wrath of God. I don't want that for you. That's why I point this out to you. That's why a cancer doctor won't let you just continue on in cancer while something is eating away at you inside. You don't condemn a doctor for a medical diagnosis, no one should condemn the Bible when it gives us a spiritual diagnosis, should they?

So what's happening on the inside of your life? Don't be satisfied with a spiritual show, especially you young people in Christian homes. You just can't be satisfied with trying to be a good little kid if your heart isn't really devoted to Christ. That doesn't mean that you're okay. We need to be conscious that God requires a purity of heart and that that's the standard that we set for what we expect out of our lives. But do you know what? We need to think even more deeply about it. Okay, I get it. I get that sinful actions come from sinful hearts. I can understand that, so can you. We see all the time that when a lover gets angry he turns around and kills people over and gives release to his sinful anger through murderous acts but, beloved, go with me here to point 3. Where do bad attitudes come from? Where do bad attitudes come from? Why is it that that stuff just comes naturally to the unconverted man? 3. Sin pollutes your entire nature. It pollutes man's entire nature, we could say. We're kind of talking about this today on a general basis, aren't we? Sin pollutes your entire nature.

Sin has contaminated, in other words, every aspect of man's being: his heart, his mind and his will. The reason that people think bad thoughts is because their very heart is polluted and corrupted. You see, here's the thing, here's the point that I want you to see: you can't view an external act apart from the internal attitude that produced it. We've seen that. Something motivated you to do your sinful actions or to not do what was right. Something motivated that. It came from a sinful attitude of one kind or another. Here's what you've got to see if you are going to get the full testimony of Scripture against the sinfulness of man: you can't view your sinful attitudes in isolation and that's what we want to do and that's where the profound realm of self-deception is so available to all of

us. You want to view, we all want to view, our sinful attitudes in isolation and say, “Oh, but that's not the real me. I was just tired. I was just stressed out. But really now that I'm back to normal, everything is okay.” No, it does not work that way.

You see, sin has contaminated the entire nature of man. Let me explain what I mean here. We're touching on the doctrine often referred to as total depravity. Man is not as bad as he possibly could be. Man is not incapable of comparative degrees of human kindness. But when we talk about sin and we talk about your entire nature, what we're saying is that man apart from Christ cannot do anything to please God whatsoever. Unredeemed sinners have no spiritual merit before God at all. They are utterly unable to do any spiritual good that is acceptable to God. They are unable to change their own condition. That's what Scripture means when it says you are dead in your trespasses and sins. You have no spiritual life. You have no spiritual pulse if you're not a Christian because your entire nature is dead to God, your entire nature is alive to sin, as it were. And the reason that sin comes so naturally is not because of isolated incidents like at some kind of silo separated one from another, no there's a common connection to all of those outbursts and lusts and different things that go on in a sinner's life.

Similar to what we said 2-3 weeks ago, there are weeds in the garden where they spread out and spread out but you pick it all up and you see that there's one common root and the common root of all of your sins as an unbeliever is the fact that you have a dead, corrupted heart that just spews that stuff out. It pulsates out and it pulsates out and it flashes forth and then perhaps comes back. It's not that it's coming back to neutral or coming back to what's really good, it's just waiting to pulsate again. Just like a heartbeat pumps blood, a sinful heart pumps it out. Not always a continual fountain that's evident for you to see but when you see the spurts coming, understand that there's a fountain underneath it. We inherit guilt and corruption from Adam. Sinful desires flow from a sinful condition that permeates man's very being.

Turn over to the book of Romans 3. Again, a familiar passage that is quoted all too easily in superficial gospel presentations. Romans 3:10, “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.” We're born into this world with a corrupt disposition that turns us away from God and inclines us toward sin and evil. It's not that you're a sinner because you sin, it's that you sin because you're a sinner, it's because your nature produces sin. It's not that individual acts classify you as a sinner, it's that you have a nature that is sinful and that's why you sin and that's why God must condemn and judge the human race. It is irredeemable in its present state. It could never be made fit in that unconverted condition. It could never be made fit for the holy presence of God.

David said in Psalm 51:5 as he was confessing murder and adultery, he said, “Against You, You only, I have sinned,” and he went on and he said, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.” He's saying it attached itself to my very nature from the moment of my conception. You see, we're not born in neutral. We're not born good. We're not born neutral, we're born into a condition of sin. It's our very nature

and so when an unsaved man rejects God, when he pursues sin, he's acting according to his very nature. It's what he loves. It's all that he knows. It's what motivates and defines him is an anti-God approach to life that expresses itself in different ways but comes to that common root. Whether it's a bow-tie guy or the drunk on the street or the wife abuser, there's all this stuff that just comes from a common core, a common pool, of corruption. The unsaved man in the final analysis, Scripture teaches, he rejects God and he pursues sin because he loves it and it's all that he knows.

Now, let's all step back. I realize this is heavy stuff but we've got to hear it. We would not be faithful as a church to the testimony of Scripture if we passed over this lightly. We wouldn't be faithful to each other. We wouldn't be faithful to our testimony to the world if we found it acceptable to soft-pedal this because it makes us uncomfortable for an hour on Sunday. That wouldn't be right. That in itself would be sinful. It's sinful not to talk about sin as a church. Here's what I want you to see. I want you to connect back to last week, kind of what we introduced this with and I want you to see in this next moment here the utter horror and the utter ugliness of sin in this natural condition of man. A good God created man in his image to be the pinnacle and the ruler over earth, made to reflect the image of this good God, made to walk in fellowship with him. The supreme one in the universe, good and great, powerful and merciful, good and kind and we're meant to reflect him and enjoy fellowship with him. That's what we're meant to do and in that high and lofty appointment, man fell. We were on Mount Everest and we jumped off and we fell and fell and fell and there's no way of getting back apart from the gospel of Christ. A tremendous privilege of position has been squandered. The one who bestowed it upon us has been attacked. That's wrong. It's perverse. Creation, Paul states, with a desire to have that reversed because it should not be this way. "And God, what can we say except we are so sorry. We are so sorry, God, for all of our rebellion. All of our sin. All of our indifference. God, compared to what you made us to be, the squalor of our spiritual condition is so sad and tragic by comparison."

Now, think with me just a little bit more. What we've been describing here is true of every man apart from Christ who has ever lived since the Fall of Adam. Now think here with me, stay with me just a little bit longer if you would: when you multiply individual corruption like that by seven billion living people right now, when you add to that the cumulative effect of thousands of years of this kind of rebellion, don't be surprised at what you see in the world. We've become so accustomed to multiple fatality shootings; we've become so accustomed to abortion and homosexuality that it just seems normal. It's not normal. It is an absolute violation of what life is supposed to look like. We can't accept this as the church of Christ. We can't accommodate ourselves to that like some people, like Andy Stanley want us to do and just kind of go along with the culture. No, we have to cry out against it. Creation is groaning against it, why isn't the church groaning against it too? It's all due to sin. It all comes back to this one common root and that root is so deeply embedded that only a supernatural act of God could ever get it out of one human heart let alone the entire human race.

Here's what I want you to see, beloved, today: it's legitimate and it's right for us to grieve our personal individual sins. We should do that. Those who mourn over sin are the only

ones who are going to be comforted. What I'm pleading with you today to do in your thinking and in your heart is this: I want you to grieve over sin because of the great cosmic assault it is on what God created in the beginning and to see what a violation it is of what the men and women on this planet ought to be doing. It is the exact opposite and it should grieve us for the sake of God that it's like that. Then in that context realize, "God, I participate in that too." But I want you today to just see sin in that vertical dimension, see it in the cosmic dimension and realize that a cosmic crime has been committed and there hasn't been final justice executed for it yet because the human race is still going about.

4. Sin has profound consequences. Sin has profound consequences. First of all, it produces spiritual slavery. We're just going to read most of these verses without any comment. Sin produces spiritual slavery. John 8:34, "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." 2 Timothy 2:26, it says unbelievers are in "the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." So sin produces spiritual slavery.

Secondly, sin produces separation from God. Separation from God. Isaiah 59:2, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." The God who made us in his image created the human race for fellowship with him has rightly and justly found himself separated from man by sin and it's not his fault, it's the fault of the human race and now man cannot find God on his own. It's tragic. It's horrifying. It's terrible.

Thirdly, sin puts us under the judgment of God. It's not just that we're separated. You can tell that the human race kind of likes that part of it but God's not going to tolerate it forever or even on an individual basis. 3. Sin places us under the judgment of God. John 3:36, "He who does not obey the Son will not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." You see, there is just this progression, spiritual slavery, separation from God, abiding under the wrath of God and you know I'm not done yet, right? Because sin is about more than this life, the consequences of sin.

Point 4. Sin leads us to eternal hell. Eternal hell. Revelation 21:8, I do want you to turn to this one. By preface, I'm reminded that Scripture says that God is not mocked, what a man reaps he will sow. There is a final accounting, a final judgment, that's coming for all of this. "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Mankind, beloved, is plunging toward eternal destruction. The judgment of God upon our race is severe and it is righteous. Is it any wonder then that the message of the gospel can be reflected, can be found in the apostolic preaching of Acts 2:40 when the Apostle Peter cried out, "Be saved from this perverse generation"? Do you see the glory and the urgency of the gospel? The gospel that promises forgiveness of sin? A new nature? A spiritual cleansing? Eternal forgiveness of sin? Do you see the gospel that promises eternal life through faith in the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ? Do you see why the gospel is good news? Do you see why it's so urgent to believe in Christ? Do you

see why Peter said in Acts 2:40 as he preached to some of those who were involved in the crucifixion of the Messiah himself, he said, "Be saved from this perverse generation." That's the gospel. The gospel is a ten alarm fire, alarms going off saying, "Look at this awful condition and come out of it to Christ. Come out of your sin to Christ. Don't you hear in your heart, as it were, the Spirit pulling you? Wooing you? Begging you? This is too desperately bad for you to stay where you're at and we beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God through faith in Christ."

We have not been speaking this morning about fables and earthly tales that have no meaning. We haven't been trying to entertain you. We've been trying to alert you to the danger of being a member of the human race and to make you hate sin for its own intrinsic evil, to see it in your own heart and say, "That repulses me and Lord Jesus, won't you deliver me from it." What else can I say, beloved? What else can I say? Why would someone sit and mock? Why would someone sit in indifference? Why would someone sit and laugh? I don't understand. Why would someone come in here from a life of sin and walk out saying, "I'm not going to change. This has no effect on me." How can you do that? Ah, I can't understand. If you're not a Christian, don't you see your horrible plight? Won't you turn from sin and turn to Christ and be saved? Please. Please. Please. If I thought it would help, I would physically get on my knees to beg.

For those of us that know Christ, to end on a word of gratitude and hope, those of us that have been delivered, those of us that God has reached down and saved as he worked through his word and brought us to faith in Christ and you've repented of your sin and you're forgiven and you're cleansed and you no longer face eternal hell. You're no longer under the judgment of God. You're no longer separated from him. You're no longer a slave to sin. Aren't you thankful? Aren't you glad? This morning, metaphorically speaking, we've got up to the very edge of hell and whiffed the smoke. "It's awful! It's awful!" And yet here we are in the hands of Christ, here we are safe in him, delivered, secure, forgiven, in his hand where he said no one can pluck you out. What mercy has been shown to you. What love was expressed in your salvation that God reached down to save you by name. That Christ bled for your sins by name. We've smelled, we've sniffed hell. The Bible says when you're in Christ now, you're smelling the aroma of life and for that to come to that conclusion after consideration of what is sin, should fill our hearts with joy. Christ has acted. Christ has saved us. Christ will keep up. We've been delivered from that horrific power and now we belong to him. Praise God.

Please bow with me as we thank him.

Father, we do thank you today for our salvation in Christ and we thank you, dear Lord, for the gospel. We thank you for those who brought it to us; we thank you for those who pleaded with us. Father, I thank you for those back in Bloomington, Indiana so many years ago that pleaded with you for my soul. Father, now we plead for the souls that are still outside the realm of your grace. Lord, you haven't exhausted your mercy, you haven't done all that you can do with your grace yet. We ask you, again, and Father, we're going to continue to ask and knock and seek until you answer so why not just do it now? Because we're not going to stop, Lord. We ask you for the souls of our loved ones

and the souls of our friends and our coworkers, all of those who are outside of Christ. Bring them in and disperse to them the grace that you had on our soul, the mercy that you've shown to us unto eternal life. But now, Father, as a redeemed people, we put everything else aside and we just look up to you and say, "Not only have you been good to us in creation, not only do we worship you as creature to Creator, we worship you as redeemed to our Redeemer. We worship you as the saved to our Savior. We worship you as the slaves to our Lord and Master. And we thank you for the eternal bonds that keep us in Christ for the security and the permanence of your love that washed us and that now keeps us and that one day will perfect us in heaven in glorified bodies around the throne of Christ forever. And what is sin won't even be asked. Who is Christ will consume us for all of eternity and we will gladly return to you the worship and thanks that should have been yours all along which we give you now in imperfection. Father, we look forward and pray for the hastening of the day when we can give it to you in perfected glory. For now, receive our thanks, receive our service, Father, which somehow through the sanctifying work of your Spirit is acceptable to you and we thank you for that privilege in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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