

“Of the Sinfulness of Man and Mercy of God”

Psalm 36

(Preached at Trinity, August 1, 2010)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The great objective of our life is to magnify God in all of His greatness. The catechism states this as man's chief end – “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”
This is our highest goal, our greatest aim.
2. The problem is most people have robbed God of His glory. They tend to elevate man while lowering God.
Psalm 36 puts both in their right position.
Verse 1 presents the transgressions of the wicked testifying to the heart of David,
Psalm 36:1 – “*that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*”
3. In contrast of this condemning description of the wicked David writes concerning God in
Verse 6 - “Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains;”
4. I title tonight's message, “Of the Sinfulness of Man and Mercy of God”
It's divided into two sections:
Verses 1-4 – The Sinfulness of Man
Verses 5-12 – The Righteousness and Mercy of God

I. **Verses 1-4** – The Sinfulness of Man

A. He has no fear of God – **Verse 1**

“*there is no fear of God before his eyes.*”

1. Paul quotes from this psalm in **Romans 3**
There are different ways to look at this idea of fear.
2. The lost will often fear judgment and hell but he sins nonetheless
This is because they don't see God in all His holy majesty. They find it easy to dismiss Him.
Imagine the blindness of a man who fails to recognize his Creator?
3. By their lives they live as if there is no God.
Psalm 14:1 – “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*”
 - a. They simply do not take Him into account.
Few people seriously contemplate coming into the presence of God
 - b. Few actually stand in awe of God. There is no reverence.
4. The Godly man lives in a state of holy fear – a high and holy reverence
Hebrews 12:28-29 – “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God *is* a consuming fire.”

B. The lost man calls evil good – **Verse 2**

“For he flattereth himself in his own eyes”

1. He is self-centered thinking that whatever he does is right
2. He flatters himself with his good intentions.
3. He loses the ability to discern good from evil

- a. The lost man has several states of sin
On one hand he knows his sin but lacks the power to reject it
 - b. On the other hand as he continues in sin he loses the ability to discern it altogether.
^{NAU} **Romans 1:28** – “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,”
 4. In such a state it is easy to see oneself as being a good person.
 5. Paul describes his conscience as seared
1 Timothy 4:2 – “Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”
- C. He’s a hypocrite – **Verse 3**
“The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit”
1. He speaks words that are deceptive. He makes himself look good
Matthew 23:27-28 – “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men’s* bones, and of all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”
 2. Since his heart tells him he is a good person he tries to fool others of his piety with his tongue.
Spurgeon: “When the heart is so corrupt as to flatter itself, the tongue follows suit.
- D. He is studious in his wickedness – **Verse 4**
“He deviseth mischief upon his bed”
1. While the righteous man is meditating upon holiness the wicked man is continually plotting his mischief. **Verse 4** says he lies in bed plotting his evil deeds
 2. When he awakens the next morning he sets his way on a course of evil
Psalms 36:4 – “he setteth himself in a way *that is not good*”
 - a. He gives himself to purposed sin, premeditated sin. He “sets” himself on the path of sin
 - b. He doesn’t just fall into sin. He plans and prepares to sin
 3. The amazing thing is he believes his ways are right
Proverbs 14:12 – “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.”
 4. David adds: “he abhorreth not evil.” Instead of hating his sin he loves it. He embraces it as his darling sweetheart.
- E. The problem with lost humanity is they don’t see themselves as vile
1. We naturally have a high view of ourselves
 2. Even the introvert is preoccupied with “self” – what are others thinking about “me”
 3. They compare themselves with other men and conclude that they are pretty good people.
 4. We come upon this frequently in evangelism – “I’m a good person.”
Psalms 36:2 – “For he flattereth himself in his own eyes”
 5. Few look at God in all His perfections

Abruptly, David now sets our minds on the infinite contrast as we now look to God.

II. Verses 5-12 – The Righteousness and Mercy of God

David looks at some of God's attributes

A. God's goodness and mercy extends to all – Verses 5-6

Psalm 36:6 – “O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.”

1. “Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens” - From the glory of heaven
 - a. The word for mercy here is רַחֲמִים
 - b. After considering the wickedness of man David the marvels that God looks upon His fallen creation with love and mercy.
 - c. It isn't the same love He has for the elect, but still it is a heart of pity
2. God could justly reign down his fiery wrath at any time as He demonstrated with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or the flood during the days of Noah.
3. God's mercy is the indescribable demonstration of His pity – It manifests God's rich compassion upon those deserving of His wrath
4. As He withholds His wrath and judgment He is granting men time to repent
5. God also demonstrates His mercy in pouring out His goodness upon sinful men – those who are His enemies.
Not only has God delayed judgment, He gives good things to His enemies.
Matthew 5:45 – “. . . he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
Psalm 145:9 – "The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.
6. David adds in Verse 5
Psalm 36:5 – “*and thy faithfulness reacheth* unto the clouds.”
 - a. This is intimately connected to God's Word - God is always faithful to His Word.
 - b. Spurgeon – “God never fails, nor forgets, nor falters, nor forfeits his word . . . To every word of threat or promise, prophecy or covenant, the Lord has exactly adhered, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.”
7. While man is vile God is perfect in every way
Psalm 36:6 Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains
 - a. All of God's ways are right

B. God has particular love and mercy to His people – Verses 7-10

1. God's loving care upon the fallen race of men is designed to draw them to repentance.
^{NAS} **Romans 2:4** – “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”
Psalm 36:7 – “How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”

2. Those who come find the fullness of life – true life
They are received into God’s house and invited to sit at His table
 - a. David describes it as being abundantly satisfied the fatness of God’s table
V.8 – “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house
V.8 – “and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” – ESV, NASB – “river of Your delights.”
 - b. This is a present reality – the people of God feast daily at the table of His blessings. Life in Christ is an abundant life.
We drink deeply from the fullness of Christ
 - c. **V.9** – “For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”
This finds its fulfillment in Christ
John 1:4 – “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”
“in thy light shall we see light.”
In the presence of God we see His glory.
- C. David prays for God’s continued mercy – **Verses 10-11**
Psalm 36:10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
 1. God’s mercy will continue. It is rich upon God’s people every day
The word for lovingkindness is חֶסֶד
 2. Knowing the sin still remaining in his heart David prays for the mercy of God’s protection.
 3. David prays for protection against the sin of pride
“Let not the foot of pride come against me”
 - a. On one hand he is praying that prideful men would not attack him
 - b. On the other hand, I think he is praying for himself.
Let not pride come upon me.
Pride, that curse that leads all men to sin. Pride that leads us to have a high view of self and forget God.
O God, protect me from this wicked sin!
Spurgeon called pride the devil’s sin.
 4. David prays that he not be deceived into following the path of the wicked
“and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.”
Let me not be turned away from following you O God.
- D. David closes the psalm with a declaration of God’s ultimate punishment of the wicked – **Verse 12**
Nahum 1:3 – “The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*”
Psalm 36:12 – “There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.”
 1. David writes as if it has already happened – the judgments of God are sure
Faith sees the wicked as ultimately being removed from the presence of God
 2. However powerful and overcoming they may seem now, their doom is sure.

Conclusion:

1. This psalm underscores the need all men have for Christ. All men are born in the category of **Verse 1** - "*there is no fear of God before his eyes.*"
2. God is a merciful God. He has sent forth Christ as a glorious token of His mercy.
Psalm 36:5 – "Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; *and* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds."
3. All who turn from their sin will find God gracious.
Psalm 36:10 – "O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart."
4. All who continue in their wickedness will find a fearful Judge.
Psalm 36:12 – "There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise."