Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Sin
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1247

For the beginning of our year we've just kind of stopped for a brief change of pace because I felt that we wanted to deal with some things that might be very formative as we look to 1977 which I believe is going to be the greatest year God has ever given us here at Grace Church. Last week with that in mind we discussed the fact that we have one goal or one incentive, one direction, one plan, one motive and that is to glorify God. We really kind of outlined that and clarified that as a theme as it runs its way through Scripture. It was very positive and very directive in terms of what God is asking of us.

At the same time as I began to think about it this week became very much aware that there is a negative side to all of that and that is the fact that we are not going to be able to glorify God unless we are supersensitive to the reality of what stands in the way of doing that and that is sin. So I thought perhaps the Lord would have us share today something on the subject of sin.

Now sin isn't something a lot of people like to talk about, something in our society that we pretty well have avoided or described away or rationalized out of existence but not in terms of God's word. I think it's essential for us as we look at a purpose in life of glorifying God that at the same time we recognize that we're never going to be able to do that unless we really are watchful in the area of sin. It's just been laid on my heart this morning to share with you right from my heart really God's attitude towards sin because I don't think we can ever have the right attitude toward it unless we see what his attitude is.

Chrysostom, the early church father said on one occasion said on one occasion, "I fear nothing but sin," and I'm with him. I don't fear that something might go wrong in the organization of Grace Church or the facilities or the programs but I have this constant watchfulness relative to sin. That's why all throughout the ages of the Church, the Church that's been used of God has been a church that dealt with sin, disciplined it, confronted it.

You really don't have to be very astute to understand that the great phenomena that blights all of human existence is the phenomena of sin. It pervades the universe. Paradise exists under one condition, the absence of sin. Once there was paradise because there wasn't any sin. Then again there will be paradise when there isn't any sin but in the meantime there is sin and there is no paradise. That's the age in which we are sentenced to live. Because of sin there are tears and there is pain and fighting and war and anxiety and discord and unrest and fear and worry and sickness and

death and all of them are the children of sin. It disturbs every relationship that exists in the human realm.

It has even created cosmic chaos in the heavens. Every time a new baby is born into the world sin awaits to great it upon its entrance. "In sin did my mother conceive me," said David, recognizing that from the very womb sin would be a reality. Sin rules every heart. Truly it can be said that sin is the monarch of man. Sin is the lord of the soul. Sin is the king of humanity.

Everybody dies. It is appointed unto men once to die and it is true also that all who die whether they die in childbirth or a childhood disease or an accident or heart disease or cancer or war or murder or whatever it is all die as a result of sin. Sin is the disease that eventually gets everybody. The Bible says the wages of sin is what? Death. Every person on this globe who has ever suffered pain, who has ever had an illness, who has ever had an injury has had it because our society has been infected with the virus of sin. Sin causes all diseases because it is the sin principle and the nature of man that brings about the degenerative process in the human stream that makes man susceptible to disease. Every broken marriage, every disrupted home, every wayward child, every shattered friendship, every argument and every disagreement can be attributed at the source to sin.

When you see the picture of what sin does in its devastation in this society of man throughout all of man's existence you can understand why in Joshua 7:13 God calls it the "accursed thing". It is compared to the venom of snakes. It is compared to the stench of a corpse and anything that is so powerful and so sinister and so dominating in the society of man deserves a careful look and understanding on the part of man. You know, we have to realize I think and you must realize it as I do that our society is so successful at selling that is selling even Christians on the fact that sin isn't as bad as God says it is. Somehow our media minded, slick society has been able to pull over the face of sin a mask and we laugh at it more than we cry.

If I could do anything today it might be to pull off the painted face and reveal the death's head that is the reality of sin. Guthrie, a Christian that lived long ago said this, "Who is the whorrysexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderous that destroys his life? Who is this sorceress that first deceives and then damns his soul? Sin. Who with icy breath blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men's gray hair with sorrow to the grave? Sin. Who by a more hideous metamorphosis than oh have ever fancied changes gentle children into snakes, tender mothers into monsters and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocence? Sin. Who casts the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by divisions in the Church rends Christ's seamless robe? Sin. Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazariteasleep and then delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who winning smiles on her face, honey flattery on her tongue stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality and when suspicion sleeps treacherously pierces our temples with a nail? What fair siren

is this who is seated on a rock by the deadly pool smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray and flings her arm around our neck to leap with us into perdition? Sin. Who turns the soft and gentlest heart to stone? Who hurls reason from her lofty throne and impels sinners mad as Gadarene swine down the precipice into a lake of fire? Sin."

He's right and you knew it. Sin is a bad thing. It is the sum of all bad things. It is so powerful and so dominant that we must get a clear Biblical understanding of its reality. I would be a fool if I assume that I could do that in one message. That could take the study of years. But I want to share with you some basic things that I think we probably ought to understand and they're very basic.

I want to ask five questions. Question number one: What is sin? If it's so bad, as bad as I've tried to say just briefly what is it? There have been all kinds of definitions. My father used to say, "People always say sin is an idiosyncrasy of individuality, a birth defect, prenatal predilection, poor secretion of the endocrine glands, anything but what it is." What is it? Look with me at 1 John 3:4 and let's get the simplest Biblical definition that sums up everything else. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," we know that from Romans 14:23. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him it is sin," we know from James 4. From 1 John 5:17 we know that, "All unrighteousness is sin". But perhaps the clearest and simplest definition of sin given is that given in 1 John 3:4 and what it says there is this. The first phrase in verse 4 literally in the Greek says, "Everyone doing sin is doing the lawlessness." The phrase, "Transgresseth also the law," is the Greek word anomia, lawlessness. Everyone doing sin is doing lawlessness. Now here's the definition, "For sin is lawlessness."

In simplicity the Bible tells us that sin is lawlessness. God is God and God is the ultimate ethical standard and God is the ultimate One who makes the moral rules. God has laid down laws which are based on what is right and what is holy and what is just and what is good. The violation of those enters into what is evil, what is unholy, what is unjust and what is bad. God makes rules and sin breaks God's rules. Sin, then, is going beyond the bounds that God has set.

Somebody might say, "Well, how do we know what the bounds are?" That is precisely answered in the book of Romans 2 in its first answer by saying God has written his law where? On man's what? Heart. The law of God is written on the heart of man. Secondly, the law of God is revealed in the pages of the Word of God. So there is the revelation of God's law in man and the revelation of God's law to man. Paul is right in Romans 1 when he says, "So that man is without excuse." God has given his law that man's life might good, that man's life might be happy, that man's life might be blessed. That's why David said in Psalms 119, "Blessed," or happy, "is the man who hears thy Word and keeps it." See? It's for our happiness and we know that.

But what has man done? We who are Christians know that. What has man done? He has violated God's law. He's like a horse in a fat pasture who jumps the hedge and lands in a quagmire. He thought there was greener grass outside God's pasture and so he jumped and ended in the muck of

sin and now he's unable to extricate himself and the longer he's there the uglier it all becomes. Sin is breaking God's law.

The second question: What is sin like? What is the nature of such lawlessness? In this I just want to give you some simple statement to help you understand what sin is like. First of all, sin is defiling. Sin has a polluting affect on the sinner and on the world the sinner affects. Sin is not only a lawless act; it is not only a defection against God. It is a defilement of the sinner and his world. The sin is to the soul what rust is to gold, what a scar is to a lovely face. Sin is to the soul what a stain is to a piece of silk, what smog is to an azure sky. You see it makes the soul red with guilt and black with sin.

The Bible has some strong things to say about the defilement, the ugliness, the filth of sin. Very strong. Zechariah 3:3, speaking of Joshua, not the Joshua of Jericho but the Joshua who is the priest in the book of Zechariah. It says in 3:3 that his garments were filthy and they are the picture of sin. Backing up to 1 Kings 8:38 it compares man's sin to the oozing, ugly sores of a death plague. There is another passage and I hesitate to use it because of the sense of propriety on my own part and yet I use it because God has given it to us through his prophet. Isaiah 30:22 compares sin to the bloody, menstruous cloth of a woman's period.

When God looks at sin he sees it as defiling, as polluting, as filthy. Why? Because it has stained the soul of man which has blotted the image of God. Sin pollutes and defiles everything. Paul, no wonder, in 2 Corinthians 7:1 calls it "filthiness of the flesh and spirit".

We don't realize it but sin is so polluting that Jesus says to Judas in John 6:70, "One of you is a devil". Sin turns man made in the image of God into a devil. Sin is defiling.

Second, sin is rebellion. It is rebellion. The idea of lawlessness introduced this thought. Sin, as Leviticus 26:27 says walking contrary to me. Sin is reacting against God. It is open opposition. Anytime you commit a sin you are in opposition to God. You are trampling God's law. You are crossing God's will and so am I. I am affronting God and I am spiting God. The Hebrew word for sin, Pasha, that word signifies rebellion because that's what sin is.

In Jeremiah 44, I want you to look at this because this is a graphic illustration of the mentality of rebellion that accommodates itself to sin. In Jeremiah 44 God as so many times through His prophets especially Jeremiah who cried throughout his ministry for a belligerent, unbending, stiffnecked people who wouldn't return to God but as so many times God is calling His people back to Himself through His prophet. But I want you to notice the illustration you have here of the rebelliousness of sin. Jeremiah 44:16 says this, "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee." This is just flagrant. Jeremiah has given them the Word and they will not listen. "We will not hear you," and frankly people that is the key to all sin. It is

the matter of the will.

Then verse 17, "But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, and if we want to burn incense to the queen of heaven that's exactly what we're going to do." They go on to give this little dialogue about the fact that, "Look, when we burned incense to this false idol, the queen of heaven, it really goes all the way back to the Semerimusthe first all the way back to the mystery religions of Babylon. "If we want to worship in that way that's exactly what we'll do. We're not interested in what God has to say." That's sin, see?

Sin is God's would be murderer. Sin would not only un-throne God it would un-God God. If the sinner had his way God would cease to be God and the sinner would replace him. When you sin, you see, you are taking over the rule which God has by his own eternal pre-existence. Herod, in Acts 12 - do you remember - stood up and made a speech, put on a big display as if he were something glorious and the people said, "It is the voice of a god and not a man," and the Bible says, "An angel came down and smote him and he was eaten with worms because he gave not God the glory." Rebellion against God. Sin defiles and sin is rebellion against God. I just want you to see what it is when you and I as a believer who say we believe in the Lordship of Christ and the sovereignty of all mighty God sin we are acting as if we wanted to un-God God. The ultimate act of ego is to do what I want no matter what God says.

Thirdly, sin is ingratitude. I thought about this in my own life. I suppose I think of it more in terms of my own life than any of the other elements of sin. Maybe it's because it's not quite as bad as some of the others that I don't like to think about but I think about the fact so often. How can I sin against God when he has done so much for me? How can I do this? How can I face Jesus Christ who has done all that he's done for me and sin against him? Have you thought about that? Listen to it from even the standpoint of a person who doesn't know Christ, just the world in general. Acts 17:28, Paul on Mars' hill and he talks about the true God, the God they don't know and he says it is "in him that you live and move and have your being". In other words you are what you are, where you are because of Him. Without Him you have no life.

Do you realize that even if you're not a Christian, even if you've never given your life to Jesus Christ, even if you've never bowed your knee before all mighty and loving God that you are nevertheless the beneficiary of His wonderful grace and mercy? You say, "In what sense?" In the sense that you have life. Matthew 5:45 says, "For he makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

I woke up the other morning, the day after it rained, I guess yesterday morning and I looked out. Wasn't it glorious? Magnificent? You know something? My unsaved neighbors enjoyed it. They did. There was snow on the mountains, a beautiful sky. What a world. Yeah, it rained on them too just like me. In fact one of my neighbors' lawn is greener than mine.

Every time an unregenerate person who doesn't know Christ goes out and has a meal it is God who has provided that. It is God who has given his tongue and his nose and his mouth the sensitivity to enjoy that delicacy and that taste. It is God who has provided the food that is more than just fuel but it is almost entertainment. It is God who has granted every beauty that every man enjoys. It is God who has given his wisdom to our bodies so that bodies of unregenerate and regenerate men alike can think and feel and act and move and sleep and rest and play and work and be useful. It is God who made love and it is God who made laughter. Lots of folks love and lots of folks laugh who don't know him. It is God who gave each man a special skill and a unique ability to be useful to himself and his family and to excel in some area so that he might know self-worth and self-love and some self-respect. It is God who providentially cares and provides for all of us so that we don't get all diseases and die all deaths.

But you know, man is like Absalom. Like Absalom who goes in and receives the kiss of a loving father who embraces him and takes him to his heart and then Absalom walks out of the room and begins the treason to dethrone his father. So is man. We might ask the same question asked in 2 Samuel 16:17: "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" Is this what you do to the God who has provided everything? And Beloved, if that's true of the unregenerate world what is it for a Christian to sin against the God who has beyond his providential grace given us his saving grace but an affront of ingratitude? How can we do it?

So the nature of sin, it is defiling, it is rebellion, it is ingratitude. Fourthly, it is incurable. It is incurable humanly speaking. Sin is a disease. It's a disease that infects and it is a congenital disease that has been passed on since Adam. In Isaiah 1, Isaiah approaches sin among the people of Israel as a disease. He says in 1:4, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity...", you're just loaded with it. Then he says this, "...a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters," and here he's talking about the congenital aspect of sin. It just keeps regenerating itself. Then he says, "They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should you be stricken anymore?" Do you like the punishment that your sin brings? "You will revolt more and more." Why when you see the consequences? The answer here, listen. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is weak and from the sole of the foot to the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed neither bound up neither mollified with ointment." You're sick. You're sick with a disease from the tip of your toe to the crown of your head and in the midst of that disease you just go further and further and further away. Can man change it? Can he make his New Year's resolution and eliminate sin? Can he do his religious calisthenics and light his candles and bow down to whatever god he manufactures or has been manufactured for him in system? Can he education himself out of it?

Jeremiah 13:23 put it this way, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopards his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." God says no. It is a disease that is humanly

incurable. John Flablesaid, "All the cheers of a penitent sinner, all of them, should he shed as many as there have fallen drops of rain since creation could not wash away one sin." He's right.

The everlasting burning in Hell couldn't purify the flaming passions from the leastsin because penitents and punishment don't eliminate sin. There is no cure humanly. Sin, you see, is a disease that can only be cured by the blood of the physician and that's why the writer of Hebrews says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins." What is sin like? Defiling, rebellion, ingratitude and an incurable disease.

Fifth, sin is antagonistic to God. Sin is antagonistic to God. In fact I'm sure you would agree that sin is the only thing God has antagonism against. That's the only thing. God does not resist homely people. Aren't you glad for that? I'm glad for that. God isn't just the God of the beautiful. You think that nowadays sometimes in Christianity where we portray all the beautiful people but God likes just us plain folks too. I've never known God to go for beauty. He said to Israel, "I didn't choose you because you were something better than anybody else. I chose you because I designed to set my affection upon you."

God doesn't resist poor people. Aren't you glad for that? In fact when Jesus came to earth he gathered around him the poor, didn't he? You know something? God doesn't resist ignorant people. Why they said of his followers, "How do these men know anything? They're unlearned hicks from Galilee." He doesn't resist cripple people. Jesus came into the world and he found the crippled people and he helped them walk, didn't he? He doesn't resist sick people. He heals them. He doesn't resist people that are despised by the world. He took an adulterous woman and gathered her in his arms and saved her, didn't he? He healed 10 lepers.

Now there's only one thing that God resists. That one thing is sin. In Jeremiah 44:4 pensively comes out of the broken heart of God this statement: "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." What does God hate? Sin. That's all, because sin destroys the image of God and the soul of man. Sin robs man of joy. Sin pollutes God's universe and you and I as Christians if anybody should certainly have the same feeling toward sin that God has. So sin is defiling, rebellion, ingratitude, incurable, antagonistic to God.

Lastly, and I think this is important to note and it's amazing to me, sin is hard work. If you're really going to be a good sinner you've got to work at it. It isn't easy. You've got to get up and go do it. All that it ever causes is pain and it's incredible to me that even with pain people work so hard at being sinners. Some people spend all their money, they run around, stay up all night, carouse, can't sleep, get stoned, drunk, wreck their car, lose their wife, destroy their kids, get sick, go to the hospital all because they're sinning and they're working hard at it.

In Jeremiah 9:5 it says, "They weary themselves committing iniquity." "Well, why are you so tired?" "I've been sinning. I'm really pooped. I've been working at it, man." Just give you a classic illustration of this, Genesis 19. I was looking in the Scripture for an illustration and I went back to Genesis 19 and, boy, was this ever a vivid one. It's the story of Sodom and the house of Lot when Lot was visited by the two angelic visitors. The two angels came to visit Lot in Sodom. Sodom was a bad place. Sodom would be characterized as a city of homosexuals and the word today in the dictionary of sodomy has reference to homosexuality. It was a city full of people who had given themselves over to homosexual kind of life.

These two angels came there and Lot meets them in the first part of the 19th chapter and he says, "Oh, my. Come to my house and I'll give you a place to stay and a place to eat and so forth and I'll wash your feet," verse 2, "And then you can get up early in the morning and go your way." In other words, "I won't impose on you at all. We'll just take care of you for the night." "Oh, no," they said, "We'll stay here in the street." Well, they didn't know what they were going to get into if they stayed in the street in Sodom. Angels are very attractive beings when they take a physical form, beautiful things.

So he pressed on them greatly and finally they gave in and entered the house and he made a feast and they had unleavened bread and they had eaten and a nice time. And before they laid down the men of the city, the men of Sodom compassed the house around both old and young, to show you how the sin had dominated everybody, all the people from every part of the city.

All of a sudden Lot looks out and he says, "What's going on? This house is surrounded with people old and young." Lot went out of the door unto them and shut the door after him and he said, "I pray you brethren do not so wickedly." Do not what? Go back to verse 5. "They called to Lot and said, 'Where are the men who came into you this night? Bring them unto us that we may know them.'" Incidentally the word 'know' does not mean get acquainted. The word 'know' in the use of the book of Genesis has reference to a sexual relationship. "Cain knew his wife," it says, "And she bore a son." That's the idea of the term.

And he says, "Don't do this wicked thing," and then in a stupid act of compromise he offers them as daughters. May have known he was safe because they were not normal in the sense of heterosexual but still any kind of compromise like this is idiocy but he offered them his daughter in order that they wouldn't fool around trying to take those angels. They said, "Stand back." These guys are - this is the night, they're all around the house. This is a lot of effort. "But the men put forth their hand," verse 10. At the end of verse 9, they pressed hard against Lot and almost broke the door down. They're going to crash the house down to get after these two.

"But the men put forth their hand," the angels, "And pulled Lot into the house to them and shut the door and they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and

great." The whole crowd was stone blind. I'd say, "Man, I'll bet that did it. I'll bet that scattered them." Look at the next statement, "So that they wearied themselves to find the door." Stone blind only made it more difficult to find the door and they actually wore themselves out trying to consummate their sinfulness without bothering to realize they were all stone blind.

Now when you get to the place where your sin is such a consuming thing as that and you have really arrived at a debauched state. But you know there are people like that? The doctor will say to them, "You keep living like that you're going to die," and they'll keep living like that.

In Psalms 7:14 is says, "Behold, he travails with iniquity," and David is looking and Saul is always after him and apparently Saul had an agent named Cush and Cush is chasing him and David's comment is, "This guy is literally in pain chasing me, but he won't quit." In Ezekiel 24:12 God looks at Jerusalem and says, "She has wearied herself with her lies". She is worn out from so many lies and doesn't stop.

In Proverbs 4:16, "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief." They can't even go to bed unless they've done evil. They got to wear themselves out to get any sleep probably because if they're not real sleepy and totally zonked their conscience will keep them awake. So it goes. Sin is hard work. People go to Hell sweating.

What is sin like then? It is defiling, rebellion, ingratitude, incurable, antagonistic to God and it is hard work. We could say a lot more but let's just say this. The evil of sin - now listen, the evil of sin is not so much seen in the millions that are damned by it as it is seen in the fact that Christ had to die for it. It cost the blood of God to conquer sin.

A third question: How many people does sin affect? The answer to that is found very readily in Romans 5:12 and I'm going to just mention it briefly and go on to the next question. Romans 5:12 says this, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for all have," what? "Sin." In Romans 3, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," 23. Romans 3:10, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Sin has affected every individual. When Adam sinned we all fell.

Paul says in Romans 5, "We were in the loins of Adam," and the Jewish mind would understand this because the Jewish person sees himself not as an individual but always as a part of a family or a tribe or a nation and apart from that he has no existence. The Jewish person understands clearly that when Achan sins his family dies and when Achan sins his family dies and his nation is defeated. Achan sins at Jericho, Israel loses at Ai. See, sin is not something that's just individual and God was pointing that out in the Old Testament, in the old covenant and to dramatically demonstrate that he made ultimate consequences on a broad base to individual acts.

So as in the case of Adam, one man sins and all of his progeny is affectively in his loins in that sinning and pays the price and the seed of corruptibility is passed from generation to generation. So the Psalmist says in 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb." All have sinned, you, me, everybody. Have you ever been sick? Have you ever had pain? Have you ever made a mistake? Have you denied God? Have you rejected - all of those categories sum up the fact of sin. No one escapes.

I want to ask a fourth question. What are the results of sin? What are the results of sin? Maybe we'll just get four. We'll see. Let me give you some. Think these through. Five of them. You say, "Boy, sin is bad," right? Everybody does it right? What are its effects?

Number one: Sin causes evil to overpower us. One of the hardest things I think for an unregenerate person to realize is why he has such a terrible time being the person he wants to be. Christians we know why. It's, "Oh wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It's being stuck with sin, isn't it? Even though we're saved the roots of that sin principled from Adam are so deep in us that even though we're saved we still have to lay aside the sin which easily besets us. We still have to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and perfect holiness in the fear of God.

The first result of sin that we face is the fact that sin has made evil overpower us and sin dominates our mind so that our thinking patterns are susceptible to evil. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and the word heart in the Hebrew thinking meant the mind. The mind is evil.

Paul says it's darkened. It's blind. It's ignorant. It can't know the things of God. Evil dominates the will and evil dominates the affection. John 3 says, "Men love darkness rather than light." So the mind and the will and affection dominated by sin create an overpowering influence on behavior so that man without God can do no righteous thing. In fact, says Isaiah, "All our righteousness is," what? "Filthy rags." Sin hangs on to man like blackness to night. Adam's sin hangs on to you and to me like Naaman's leprosy hung on to Gehazi and it will hang there until in the grace of Jesus Christ his forgiveness removes it.

Even as Christians we've got to realize that sin in us is like a sleeping lion and the least thing awakens its rage. It's like a smoldering flameless fire the wind of temptation fans into a fury. So the first result of sin is that it overpowers us. But you want to hear something great? Christ overpowers it. Is that right? When you come to Christ he translates you out of that kingdom of darkness into his own kingdom of light.

The second result of sin - and this we're aware of - sin brings us under the control of Satan. Sin brings us under the control of Satan. When we enter into this world we are under the control of "the prince of the power of the air," Ephesians 2:2 says. We are slaves to Satan. We yield ourselves as servants to sin, Romans 6:16 and whoever we yield ourselves to "his servants we are whom we obey." We are of our father, the devil, John 8:44. We are not free as the Jews tried to say they were in John 8. "We're free and have never been in bondage to any man," they said and Jesus said, "Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin." We're in bondage to Satan's system. The devil rules the sinner. There is no freedom until Jesus comes along and says, "If the sun shall make you free you shall be free." I'll lay thoseyou shall be free for real.

It's a terrible thing, you know, to live in this world without Christ and realize you're not free and you're not even choosing between right and wrong. You are a slave to sin and Satan. You are dominated by a power beyond you.

There's a third that follows consequently on the first two. Sin overpowers us, brings us under the control of Satan and thirdly, makes us objects of God's wrath. The ultimate end is that we're going to be the bull's eye for God's guns of judgement. Ephesians 2:3 says the result is we are the children of wrath. God's wrath is infinite. It's not a passion with him. It is an act of his pure and holy will whereby he hates sin and decrees to punish it. The sinner may eat and drink and be merry and in the folly of that act he awaits only the judgement of a Holy God.

Like DamoclesBanquet who while he sat eating with a sword hanging over his head by a small thread still had the stomach to eat so the sword of God's wrath and curse hangs over the head of the sinner who continues to sit and say, "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." God's wrath is coming on all sin. According to 1 Thessalonians 1:10 it is only Jesus who saves "us from the wrath to come." Isn't that great?

So sin causes evil to overpower us, it causes Satan to control us and it causes us to be the objects of God's wrath. Fourthly, sin subjects us to all the miseries of life. You will never get the blessings unless you come to Christ. If you live in sin then all that ever happens is misery. Job 5:7 says, "Man is born unto trouble." Always think of that song, "You've got trouble here in River City." Listen, we don't even have trouble the Music Man said in River City. We've got trouble everywhere. We've got trouble in Panarama City. We got trouble because sin makes trouble. Like in Jude where he says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," and what he meant by that is keep yourselves in the sphere where God's love is dropping the blessing. Keep yourself in the place to be blessed.

Apart from Christ man knows only misery. The creature says Paul is subject to vanity and Solomon with all that he had of worldly goods said, "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity." What it means is emptiness. Everything is empty. Everything is nothing. Sin has degraded man of his honor and has robbed him of his peace and his heart is troubled and it is as Isaiah says in chapter 54, "His heart is like a

troubled seed. It cannot rest and casts up mire and dirt." You look at the world around you and you see troubled, sad people who have pain and anguish and they can't make it and all they know is misery. Life is miserable and empty because of sin.

Fifthly, all that it all ends up for sin damns the soul to Hell. So all said and done, "Where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched," said Jesus, "A lake of fire that burneth forever and ever." I tell you people, I hope you get a recommitment to the heinousness of sin. Don't let our society make us back down. Let's hold God's view.

Jesus comes along and says, "I know this sin is bad. I know you're guilty but I offer you forgiveness." John says, "He has forgiven all your iniquities for his name sake." Paul says, "Happy are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin are covered. Happy is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin." Christ comes and says, "Hey, I'll forgive it," and like I read you at the beginning of our fellowship Micah says, "Who is a pardoning God like thee, who buries your sin in the depths of some forgotten sea?" Isn't that what we're looking for? What would be the one thing a sinner would want to hear? A message of forgiveness.

I've been corresponding with a man who is a sinner and we have something in common. I'm a sinner. But he was a sinner in a public way. He was one of the Manson family, Charles Tex Watson. He committed murders that were incredible, beyond belief that a human being could do what he did, stabbing and mutilating and pulverizing people's bodies with bullets. Since he's been in prison he's been writing me some letters. This is one that I received.

"I am privileged to be working for our Lord everyday. The dinners here are a little better. We get to have a Christmas package from home." He's of course in prison for the rest of his life. "My studies are coming along just fine. I'm now a full-time student chaplin studying at least six hours a day in the Word of God, praying without ceasing but not taking any correspondence courses. Just studying as the Spirit leads in several fantastic studies dividing doctrine into books and tapes. The Spirit is the best teacher without a doubt.

"I speak every 10 days and teach weekly around 60 to 70 at weekly services and 120 or more on Sunday mornings and special groups. My messages are determined by what the Spirit leads me into during my studies, what the congregation seems to need and my own growth experience. I feel one has to actually experience something before he can preach on the subject to make it real and bold and let ofthe Spirit. My messages have been 45 minutes longer but I would like an hour to lay it out right.

"I use outline notes with Scripture. The more grounded I become the less notes I need. I put the message together during my Spirit-led studies. Preaching and teaching is a real responsibility so lots of study and prayer is needed which takes me away from my correspondence. Feeding the sheep

here comes first in my life for Him. I love you with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength which comes from our most precious Father. In His divine love, Charles."

You tell me how Charles Tex Watson becomes a fellow minister of the Gospel with me and I'll tell you how God forgives sin and then I'll tell you he'll forgive yours. Once you come to Jesus Christ he'll keep on forgiving it, 1 John 1 says. Then someday we can all get into Heaven and sit around and share testimonies like this.

I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled me and that he counted me faithful putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and unbelief and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to what? Save sinners of who I am chief. Aren't you glad? If you are say Amen. Let's pray.

If some of you this morning are here in our midst and you've never given your heart to Jesus Christ, you've never known to have your sin forgiven and your soul cleaned white as snow but you have a desire to know that we wish and pray that this would be the day. You can invite Jesus Christ to come into your life right now and forgive your sin. He'll do it. Some of you who are Christians have been sinning and somehow you haven't had the right attitude toward it. Boy, you've passed it off. The Spirit of God has hit you this morning like he hit me and you got a little cleaning up to do. This might be the transforming day in your life. Don't go away if you really need to do that.

Thank you our Father for the great time we've shared this morning and, O Lord God, give us such a hatred of sin and such a love for you that we might know what holy zeal is. Lord, for this day apply what we've learned and bring us together again tonight as we answer Bible questions that we might know what your Word teaches and that we might know how to teach others. We'll praise You and thank You in Jesus name. Amen.

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