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

The Breadth and Depth of Sin
Scripture: Genesis 3:1-7
Code: 90-234

As you know, we are in a study of origins from the book of Genesis and looking currently at Genesis chapter 3. Admittedly, we are launching off of that chapter some, but it at least is home base for us and you can turn there in your Bible as I'll make a couple of references to this first seven verses of Genesis 7. In the opening of the third chapter of Genesis, you have the record of the serpent in the Garden tempting Eve, and her subsequent disobedience to God, and then Adam following in her disobedience. And immediately upon that disobedience, they were both filled with shame, as indicated by the awareness of their nakedness in verse 7, and the sewing together of fig leaves to cover themselves.

This incident has monumental impact. Up to this point, according to chapter 1 verse 31, God saw all that He had made, that would be everything that He had created in the six days, and behold, it was very good. Everything was very good. Chapter 2, of course, is an expansion of the creation of man on day six. And so at the end of chapter 2 everything is still very good. But when you come to chapter 3, a dramatic change takes place and from then on everything is very bad.

The simple narrative of the opening seven verses of Genesis chapter 3 describes for us the first act of human disobedience which brought about the curse on all mankind: the Fall. The impact of that Fall has touched every part of the universe. It is accurate to say that absolutely everything wrong in our world is because of sin. If there were no sin there would be nothing wrong. If there were no sin, everything would be very good. Everything created in the heavens, everything created on the earth would be very good as it was on day six. But because of sin, everything is very bad. From World Wars, terrorism, mass murders, serial killings, plane crashes, auto accidents, fires, crippling and maiming of people through accidents, nuclear reactor disasters like Chernobyl, radiation poisoning, pollution, cancer, heart disease, all illnesses to all broken relationships, all divorce, all orphaned children, all drugs, all crime, all dereliction in all forms, all confusion, all conflict, all struggle, all disappointment, all anxiety, all fear, all guilt, all depression, all sorrow, all failure, all remorse, as well as all lust, and selfishness, and pride, and hatred, and covetousness, and rebellion, and murder, and stealing, and sexual acts outside of marriage, and irresponsibility, and disobedience to parents. In a summary: all evil, all sadness, all failure, all death is because of sin.

And people who don't believe in sin and don't understand the Fall cannot diagnose properly the human dilemma. It is impossible to understand the world. It is impossible to understand the cosmos, the ordered world of creation. It is impossible to understand man. It is impossible to understand the

disintegration of matter. It is impossible to understand the collapsing world and universe. It is impossible to understand man's behavior if you do not understand that it is all a product of sin. And all sin in the world is a result of what happened in Genesis 3.

So, Genesis 3 as a point of origin is absolutely critical. In fact, it is arguably the most important chapter in the Bible because it explains why the rest of the Bible tells the story of redemption. Everything wrong is because of sin. And ultimately, everything dies. Everything in the physical world dies, and sin is the killer.

And we really do need to pull off the painted masks that sin wears and reveal the death's head that is behind the mask. One old writer said, "Who is the hoary sexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress who steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is the 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 hairs with sorrow to the grave? Sin. Who, by a more hideous metamorphose than Ovid ever fancied, changes gentle children into vipers, 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 Nazarite asleep and 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, seated on a rock by the deadly pool, smiles to deceive, sings to allure, 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 a precipice into a lake of fire? Sin."

That's prosaic and it's true. And this is the foundation of any true worldview. Any accurate understanding of the way things are in the world demands an understanding of sin. Without an understanding of this. there is not a true understanding of anything because sin has affected everything. Listen to Romans 8 verse 20, "For the creation was subjected to futility, or to emptiness, not of its own will but because of him who subjected it." In other words, it wasn't that the whole of creation wanted this futility, this fallen condition; it was the punishment of God for the sin of man. The creation itself, verse 21 says, "Also will be set free from its slavery to corruption." There is a defining statement. Currently the entire creation, everything that was made on the six days of creation, is in slavery to corruption. That is a defining statement in Romans 8:21. And that's why verse 22 says, "The whole creation groans and suffers like the pain of childbirth together until now."

And again, the whole creation, in every aspect of it, is collectively suffering through the pains of the curse that God placed on it, the futility, the inability to be what it was designed to be, and that's all as

a result of sin. Because of sin, no part of creation now exists as God intended it to be. You're not the way God intended you to be. I'm not the way God intended me to be. Birds aren't the way God intended them to be, and animals aren't the way God intended them to be, and plants aren't the way God intended them to be, and the seeds of the earth are not the way God intended them to be, and water isn't the way He intended, and land, and mountains, and all the wondrous phenomena of the stellar realm. All of the planets, and all of the stars, and all that goes into infinity is not what God originally made it to be. It is all reduced to some level of, look at verse 20, futility. It was subjected which means it was torn down; subjected, it was brought under. Futility. Futility is *mataiots* in the Greek, and it basically means "be without success." That would be a good meaning for the word. Or another way to say it, "unable to achieve a goal." To be a failure, basically.

So, that the point here is that the whole created universe fails to be what God designed it to be. It is all short of God's intention. It is unable to achieve its goal. It is unable to achieve its purpose. It was literally, by the Fall, subjected to an unsuccessful existence.

And then, in verse 21, as I mentioned, there is a slavery to corruption. Slavery indicates an inability to free oneself, a bondage that can't be broken. Here is this universe unsuccessfully trying to achieve its intended purpose. It is unable to do that. Nothing in the universe can be what God designed it to be. And therefore it is enslaved to principles of corruption. That simply can be defined by two words: decay and eventual death. Decay and death. Everything is in decay and headed for extinction. Everything in the universe is going in that direction. The whole thing is enslaved to corruption.

And then, in verse 23, or 22, I'm sorry, it says, "The whole creation groans," *stenaz*, and that verb usually is used to refer to the cry of someone who is in a dreadful situation with no hope of escape. It's someone in an impossible situation. So, here is the whole creation unable to achieve its God-designed purpose, enslaved to the process of decay and death, crying out with groans that represent the frustration of being unable to extract yourself from a dreadful situation. And, along with it, suffering the pains of childbirth. That's metaphoric; the severest and lasting pains, the increasingly hard pains of bringing forth a child are like the pains that creation feels. The groaning under a constant, severe pain as in childbirth.

Now, that is a description of the current universe. And verse 23 adds, "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan." And he's talking here about believers. Everybody groans, everybody groans under this decay and death, and even believers feel the weight of that eagerly, he says, waiting for our adoption as sons and waiting for the redemption of our body. We're waiting to finally be released from this enslavement to corruption and to be what we have not only been created to be, but recreated in Christ to be.

So, you have an entire universe that can best be explained by Romans 8:20 to 22. No education, no socialization, no civilization, no psychology, no technology, no physiology. No advances in any of

those realms can ever alter this inevitable dilemma. This is how it is in the universe. Everything tends toward death. Everything is in a process of decay. The entire universe feels the effect of having been, by God, subjected to futility.

Now, the question comes: what caused all of this? You go from a universe in chapter 1 verse 31, stated that God said He saw all and it was very good, to a universe where nothing is very good. Everything is blighted. Everything is affected by decay and ultimately headed for death. This is massive change. This is a wholesale alteration. This is a complete reversal. How does this all happen? And for that, I want you to turn back in Romans to chapter 5 and remind you of a verse I read you last week. Romans 5 verse 12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” Now, what this tells us is very simple. Sin entered the world through one man. And by that sin came death; and, of course, implied the decay that leads inevitably to death. First Corinthians 15:22 says it in even more brief and specific words, “In Adam all die.”

Now listen, all death that exists in the universe can be traced back to one man. It can be traced back to one man, Adam. What Adam did in the Garden, as a recorded in Genesis chapter 3, what he did as his wife led him to do it, literally brought sin into this universe, and with it brought death on the entire universe as God subjected it all to futility, brought it into slavery to corruption, and left it to groan and suffer until the day when He renews the earth, when He mitigates the curse, and finally at the end of the Millennial kingdom, when He uncreates the fallen creation, and creates a new heaven and new earth.

The story of our world is the story of sin. That’s really all you need to know. Now, go back with me to Genesis chapter 3. And I want to do a little exercise with you, and I just do this really for emphasis. You could probably do it yourself, but I want you to watch how this happens. The word “sin” doesn’t appear in Genesis 3; the word “fall” doesn’t appear in Genesis 3, and yet we call it the chapter which sin entered the world, and rightly so. We call it the Fall, and it is rightly so, the Fall. So, the question comes up, how do we know that this was really as monumental as we say it is? I mean, to put it simply, I told you this last week: the Jews look at the story of Genesis 3 and they say, well, that was Adam and that was Eve, that was their problem. Nothing passed from them to us. Jewish theology does not believe in total depravity; they do not believe in original sin. They think we all come into the world with a clean slate and we have the privilege of making a decision that relates only to us.

That’s not how it is. As I read you in Romans 5:12, when Adam went, we all went. Through the sin of one man, sin entered the world, and with that sin came death. We all died, everything died, when Adam sinned. And so, throughout all of human history, everything is bad. And if you question that, all you have to do is come out of chapter 3, just come out of chapter 3. First in chapter 3, according to verse 7, they felt shame for the first time. Chapter 2 ends, verse 25, the man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed. You know why they could be naked and not ashamed? Because they didn’t

have an evil thought about anything. There was not an evil thought in existence. Their thoughts were only pure, and God-honoring, and God-exalting. And their perspective was God's perspective. There was no ego. There was no "I". They didn't view the world in any selfish manner. There was no perversion of any kind of thought. There was no such thing as an evil thought. And so, there was no reason to be ashamed of nakedness. Full exposure on the part of man and woman without any shame because there was no such thing as evil in their mind or in their actions.

But all of a sudden in verse 7 of chapter 3, their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked. All of a sudden they were having thoughts they had never had before. All of a sudden, they were thinking things they never thought before, and the paralyzing reality of wickedness caused them to be embarrassed, and so they covered themselves. And there is the first indication of evil thoughts, evil thoughts. Then, the next thing that comes, they wanted to hide from God. Verse 8, they tried to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God. Something is really different here. All of a sudden they have evil thoughts, and they get embarrassed, and they have to cover themselves, and then they want to run from God. And they used to walk and talk with God in the cool of the day, and there was no reason to run from God because there was nothing to hide. There weren't any thoughts you wouldn't want God to know, there weren't any words you wouldn't want God to hear, there weren't any actions you wouldn't want God to see. And now, all of a sudden they want to run from God and get away and God has to come and find them.

And then, you follow along further in the chapter, and God confronts them about what they did and Adam says, "The woman You gave me, she did it." And you hear blame shifting. He didn't, by the way, really blame Eve. He blamed God. He didn't say "this woman," he said, "the woman You gave me." His point was: I went to sleep single; I woke up married. And frankly, God, You could have picked any woman You wanted. You picked her; that's not my call. He's really blaming God.

So, now what you have, you have a guilty conscience, you have feelings of shame, you have hiding from God. And then, you have the unwillingness to accept responsibility for one's sin which shifts the blame not on another person but on God Himself and says, well, God, if You hadn't made the world the way You made it, and You hadn't given me the woman You gave me, it would be like this. It's really Your fault. And then, God pronounces a curse on them. Cursed, verse 14, cursed verse 17. God cursed them and the whole universe felt the curse. It was obvious the curse touched more than them. That's the cattle, they were cursed more than the cattle, they were cursed more than every beast of the field, but that was talking to Satan. Satan would be cursed more than any other animal, but the animals would be cursed. And the woman would be cursed with pain in childbirth and with marital conflict. And the man would be cursed because the ground would be cursed, and so the ground would start bringing forth thorns and thistles, and it wouldn't be like it was in the paradise of Eden, and so you can see the curse begins to be felt everywhere. And we'll go into that in more detail in the future. And then, you come to the end of chapter 3, and both of them are driven out of the Garden because God had to protect them from eating the tree of life, lest they live forever in a cursed

condition. That would really be an ultimate curse.

Well, we don't know at what point between the sixth day and the seventh day of God's rest and the birth of their first child came. We don't know where the Fall came; we don't know how long they lived in the bliss of Eden. But in chapter 4, when they conceived a child, they had already fallen. That's very clear because they brought forth sinful children who needed to make a sacrifice to God. You wouldn't need to make a sacrifice to God if you weren't a sinner and fallen.

And then, what you find in chapter 4 is murder, right? The first crime recorded in the Bible, murder. Cain kills his brother Abel. Further down in chapter 4, verse 19, "Lamech took to himself two wives." Now, you've got polygamy. You go down to verse 23, "Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zilah, 'Listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech for I have killed a man for wounding me.'" Here's murder out of vengeance. Here's a second murder and we're still in the fourth chapter. After genealogy, go over to chapter 6. The genealogy indicates that years pass, and the years are listed in that genealogy, the book of generations of Adam. You can read them yourselves; it tells them how long they lived. And it says in chapter 6 verse 5 that the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And the Lord said, I'll blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land from man to animals to creeping things to birds of the sky, for I'm sorry I had made them.

They were all feeling the curse. The whole of created life was feeling the curse. And God says, I'm just going to wipe it all out. Verse 11, "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God. The earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." I don't know how many times He needs to say "corrupt," but He says it three times. Verse 13, "God says to Noah, and Noah was a righteous man," verse 9 says. He was apparently along with his sons and their wives and his wife, the only righteous. God says, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them, and behold, I'm about to destroy them along with the earth." And He did in the Flood, destroyed them, and He literally destroyed the earth in the sense that He reshaped it. And when we get to the Flood in chapter 6 we'll talk about that.

This, frankly, tells us, and I think the Bible's most penetrating descriptions of the extent of man's sin is found here in chapter 6. If you want to know how bad it was, and how bad it was very fast, all you need to do is read that the Lord saw, verse 5, "That the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every, every imagination or intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." That's a very comprehensive statement, to the degree that God was sorry He had made man on the earth, grieved in His heart. He said, "I'm going to block them out," and down in verse 11 and 12, as I read, corrupt, corrupt, corrupt.

This again is the Bible's most penetrating description of the extent of man's sin. And it's in the primeval period. And it frankly shows us no progress. It isn't that God created man and he's been getting better. God created man and he instantly got worse and he keeps getting worse.

There are seven elements to this description. Let me just hit them for you. Seven, in seven major ways sin is indicated. In its extent, first of all, on the earth. It was really worldwide. Verse 6, "The Lord was sorry He made man on the earth." In verse 7, He's going to blot them all out over the whole earth. Verse 12, "God looked on the earth and it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." So, first of all, the extent of this sin was in the whole earth. Secondly, the inwardness of this sin. It was systemic, it was endemic, it was inside man as indicated by verse 5, "Every intent, all the imaginations," that is the thoughts, all the intent or imagination of the thoughts of his heart. The extent of sin, the whole earth. The inwardness of sin, down to the very thoughts. And it even goes deeper into the very nature of man, in the forming of those thoughts. Not just the thoughts, but the intent of those thoughts. You're getting behind it. We could say even the motivation of man is corrupt. The whole earth is corrupt. The thinking of man is corrupt. His mind is corrupt, and his deep motivations are corrupt.

And then, He talks about the absolutely exclusive character of this sin. In verse 5 He says, "It was only evil continually." Man's behavior was exclusively evil. And it was exclusively evil, number five, continually. So, you see the sin in its extent. You see the sin in its inwardness in the thought patterns, and you see it in its motivation down at the very intent level. And you see it on its exclusiveness; it's only sin. And you see it in its continuousness; it's continually sin. And then, in its inclusiveness. He says down in verse 12, "All flesh had corrupted their way." All flesh, all flesh. If you were to look over to chapter 8 verse 21, you have a repeat of a statement with a little bit of a difference. The middle of verse 21, "The intent of man's heart is evil from his youth." This indicates the earliness of sin, from the very start of life.

So, you really see, this is a very elaborate description of depravity. This is a very elaborate, careful description of the sweeping condemnation of man. And we're in chapter 6 of Genesis, and it's this bad. So bad that God drowns the entire planet, except for eight people in the worldwide flood. Look at chapter 7 verse 23. This will show you how bad it was. "Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals, to creeping things, and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark." God literally obliterated the planet, with the exception of the animals that were on the ark and the eight in the family of Noah.

If you follow the story in to chapter 9, Noah and his family finally saw the water subside. So, Noah is given a new commission, the same commission Adam and Eve were given. Chapter 9 verse 1, "All right, Noah, you and your family go out, be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth again." Let's try this a

second time, guys. “And you can rule the animals,” He tells them in verse 2, “The fear of you, the terror you shall be on every beast of the earth and every bird of the sky, with everything that creeps on the ground, all the fish of the sea, into your hands they are given.” And what He’s saying there is you can kill anything you want. That’s right, you can kill anything you want. Every moving thing, verse 3, that is alive, shall be food for you.

So, He says, go out and do what I originally gave Adam and Eve the right to do, and that is to rule over the creation, though initially before the Fall they weren’t to kill the animals. There was no such thing as death because there was no such thing as sin. Now, they can actually kill the animals that have been provided for them. Be fruitful, multiply, let’s do this again. By the time you get to the end of the chapter, you have a terrible situation, absolutely terrible situation. Noah is drunk and he’s exposed in some prurient sexual way. And a curse is pronounced on his son ’cause they saw his father’s nakedness in his drunkenness. He was drunk and he was naked in some lewd manner, and here you have the first sexual sin.

You have some more genealogy in chapter 10 and then you come to chapter 11. And you go to verse 7 and you have strife. Strife is initiated here in the confusion of languages. You come to chapter 12 and verses 10 to 20, and you have lying. Abram lies about his wife, Sarah, says she’s not his wife. Tells a lie ‘cause he doesn’t trust God. Tells Pharaoh that Sarah is his sister. Chapter 13, you have strife in verse 7 between Abram’s flocks, Abram’s flocks and Lot’s. In the 13th verse of the 13th chapter it says of Sodom, “The men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.” So, Sodom we know what the sin was. What was it? It was the sin of homosexuality. And I’m sure all kinds of other attendant sins. In chapter 14 you have the first war. In chapter 16 verse 4, you have adultery, Abram with Hagar, producing a son. In chapter 18 and verse 20 the Lord says again, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great and their sin is exceedingly grave.”

Things are getting worse. Chapter 19, the whole ugly, sorted, bizarre homosexual activity. The end of chapter 19, by the way, the homosexuals try to even rape the angels who came down in the 19th chapter of Genesis. You come to the end of that chapter, and you have Lot committing incest with his two daughters. You come in to chapter 20 and you have lying again. You come in to chapter 21 and you have cruelty toward Hagar and Ishmael. You come in to chapter 22 verse 24 and you have the first concubine. That’s a sex slave in today’s vernacular. You come in to chapter 26 and you have famine. You have lying also in chapter 26, I won’t go in to the detail, but Isaac followed the pattern of his father Abraham and lied about his wife, as his father had lied. You come to chapter 26 and you have the terrible quarreling that goes on, indicated in chapter 26 verse 18 to 22. Quarreling about wells. You come to chapter 27, you have deception. It just goes on like that. I could do this for another hour.

But let me just run it by you fast: 29, treachery, deception. Chapter 30, anger. Chapter 30, adultery. Chapter 30, polygamy. Chapter 31, deception. Chapter 31, theft. Chapter 31, idolatry. Chapter 31,

anger. Chapter 31, implacability, or unwilling to bend. Chapter 32, hatred. Chapter 34, rape. Chapter 34, mass murder. Chapter 34, looting. Chapter 35, idolatry. Chapter 37, selling someone into slavery, betrayal. Chapter 37, harlotry and incest, and so it goes.

Now, wouldn't you say something dramatically has changed from the statement, "And God saw everything He made and it was all very good?" Yeah. Something changed, is right. And what changed is recorded in Genesis chapter 3. What changed is that sin came into the picture and polluted everything, and with it came death. By one man, sin entered the world, and death passed to all men because all have sinned.

Now, how are we to understand sin? And we'll go back to Genesis 1 and look at details, but I want you to understand the world that we live in. How are we to define and understand sin? Well, we have five questions we're looking at. Number one question, I remind you: what is sin? What is sin? Well, if you look at the Hebrew Old Testament words, you'll find a number of words used to describe sin, more than a dozen. They mean to err, to go astray, to wander, to overstep, to depart from the way, or to depart from the truth, to rebel, to transgress, to be stubborn, to act unfaithfully or treacherously, to be deceitful, to treat violently, to wrong, and words like badness and wickedness. There's also a Hebrew word to be guilty, another one to offend, another one to be unrighteous, another one to twist, another one to distort, and another one to be perverse. Those are all ways to describe or define sin.

And in the New Testament there are a number of words also to define sin. It means to miss the mark, to go astray, to transgress. It means to do evil, to fall, to disobey, to be obstinate, unrighteous, impious, culpable, ignorant, to have a debt, to be evil, to be opposed to God, et cetera. All of those things.

But how have we summed it up? We summed it up by 1 John 3:4, "Sin is the transgression of the law." Sin is disobeying God. That's it. And so, I've given you this definition: sin is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character and law of God. Sin is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character and law of God. Anything less than the holiness of God is sin. If you are anything other than as holy as God is, that's sin. And if you do anything to violate His law, that's sin. So, sin, then, is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character and law of God. And I confess, that's a MacArthur definition. That's one that I worked out in my own mind because I think it sums it up. Any thought, any word, any act, or any omission that is inconsistent with the perfect, holy character of God, or in any way violates His law, is sin. It is lawlessness. And the construction of 1 John 3:4 makes lawlessness and sin synonyms.

And as I said a week ago, you can't define sin as a violation of the law of God if you don't believe the Bible is the law of God, right? So, because our society rejects the Bible, there is no definition of sin, and we take polls all the time. You say, "Well, what about people who don't have God's law? What about people who are ignorant of God's law?" Well, according to Romans 1, they are without excuse

because that which is to be known of God is manifest around them in the created world and in reason. And chapter 2 of Romans says that the law of God is written where? In their hearts. It's part of being human to have the law of God in your heart, a law that is consistent with Scripture.

Sin, then, is an offense against God. That's why David in Psalm 51:4 says, "Against Thee only have I sinned." All sin ultimately and primarily is against God. You might sin against another person. In some ways, that's incidental to the real direction of that sin, which was an offense to God, who is the lawgiver and who is morally perfect.

So, we define sin. The second question we asked: what is sin like? And I told you sin is defiling. That is to say it is a disposition of the heart that corrupts everything we think, everything we say, everything we do so we have to say the heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked. We have to say that there is in us no good thing. Even the best about us is filthy rags. It is a deep defiling in our very nature that corrupts everything we do.

Secondly, sin is not only defiling, it is rebellious. It is by nature the despising of God. It is by nature the dethroning of God and the enthroning of self. Thirdly, sin is not only rebellion, it is ingratitude. It like the nine lepers who were healed by Jesus and never came back to say thanks. Sin is to take everything that God has given us in His created world and never return thanks to Him. It is utter ingratitude.

So, we said to you last time, sin is defiling, rebellion, and ingratitude. And then, I think we stopped at this point: sin is hard work. Did we mention that? Sin is hard work. You know, most people go to hell sweating because there's a furious effort to really consummate as much sin as they possibly can. It produces pain and death, and yet people work very hard at sinning successfully. They, in their lusts, conceive of sin, as James says, and then they work out the fulfillment of the conception. Jeremiah 9, Jeremiah says, "O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." He's weeping about the sinful people who are being punished by God. He said, "O that I had in the desert a wayfarer's lodging place that I might leave my people and go from them, for all of them are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men, they bend their tongue like their bow, lies and not truth prevail in the land for they proceed from evil to evil and they do not know Me, declares the Lord." They just go from one sin to the next, to the next, to the next. "And everyone be on guard against his neighbor and do not trust any brother because every brother deals craftily, every neighbor goes about as a slanderer, and everyone deceives his neighbor, and doesn't speak the truth. They have taught their tongues to speak lies." Listen to this, verse 5, "They wear themselves out committing iniquity." They weary themselves committing iniquity. They go to hell sweating.

Psalm 7:14, "Behold he travails with wickedness." They literally are in a relentless, passionate drive to do sin that wearies them. That is illustrated in such dramatic fashion back in Genesis 19. You

remember what was happening. Two angels came to Sodom in the evening. As angels can do, they take on a human form. And two angels came in a male form, and Lot saw them, and went to meet them, and bowed down his face to the ground. And he said, “Now, behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant’s house.” He sees these beautiful angels in appearance as men and he says, get in the house quick, please spend the night, wash your feet, indicating that they did appear in a very human way. “That you may rise early and get out of here.” They said no, “But we shall spend the night in the square.” We’ll just stay out here in the square. He urged them strongly. “So, they turned aside to him and entered his house, and he prepared a feast for them, baked unleaven bread and they ate. Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom surrounded the house both young and old, all the people from every quarter.”

A mob of men collects around his house. “And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.’“ I mean, that’s pretty straightforward, isn’t it? We want to have sexual relationships with those two beautiful men. Lot went out to them to the doorway and shut the door behind him. He said, “Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters.” This was a stupid thing to do but he was on the spur of the moment making a poor judgment, “I have two daughters who have not had relations with men, two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you. Do to them whatever you like, only do nothing to these men in as much as they have come under the shelter of my roof.” Foolish, foolish thing for him to do. They said, “Stand aside, get out of the way, we are not interested in women.” Furthermore, they said, “this one came in as an alien and already is acting like a judge. Now, we,” and they’re talking about Lot, “now we will treat you worse than them.

So, they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door, but the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. That would be the angels. “And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness,” look at this, “both small and great. They made them all blind so they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.” You know what? They didn’t give up. They just got blind. They just went blind and they’re still trying to get the door open. Talk about a consuming passion, literally, indicative of the fact that sin is hard work. It consumes people’s lives and energies.

Proverbs 4:16 says, “They can’t sleep unless they do evil.” They’re robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble. They stay awake just to perpetrate wickedness. This is sin. It’s hard work to sin. In fact, in Isaiah 5:18 he says, “People are like animals who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood and sin. They drag sin as if with cart ropes.” They’re like an ox, a dumb ox, hooked up to a cart load of sin, they drag it around like a beast of burden. That’s what sinners do. Sin is wearying. Sin is hard work. It is defiling. It defiles all the way down to the essential components of our nature. It is rebellion against God. It wants to dethrone God. It is ingratitude to God. And it is a life-consuming enterprise of hard work, and sinners weary themselves in an effort to fulfill their lusts.

Fifthly, sin is incurably fatal. Sin is incurably fatal. The soul that sins it shall die, Ezekiel 18 says. And Romans 3, “The wages of sin is death.” And man can’t do anything about it ‘cause his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, Jeremiah 17. The whole head is sick, as Isaiah 1:4 to 6. He’s sick from the tip of his head to the tip of his feet and everything in between. And he has been blighted with an incurable disease that ultimately will kill him with an eternal death. That’s why Jeremiah 13:23 says, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Of course not, then you also can do good who are accustom to doing evil.” You can’t do good any more than a leopard can change his spots by wishing them away, or an Ethiopian the dark color of his skin.

The problem is, even man at his deepest point, his conscience is defiled. It says in Titus 1:15, “Even their conscience is defiled.” Even the divinely granted mechanism to cause them to do right is defiled. The warning system is broken. The warning system is defiled. Sin is incurable. John Flavel, the Puritan, wrote this, “All the tears of a penitent sinner, should he shed as many as there have been fallen drops of rain since the creation, cannot wash away one sin. The everlasting burnings in hell cannot purify the flaming conscience from the least sin.” End quote.

There’s no human cure. There’s no way that the sinner can expiate his sin even in hell. That’s why hell lasts forever, it doesn’t expiate his sin. There is no human cure, there is no resolution, there’s no reformation, there’s no religion, there’s no reeducation. Nothing man does can cure the deadly malady. It will kill him physically as it has killed him spiritually, and it will ultimately kill him eternally.

Note this, please. God is not a respecter of persons. God is not a racist. God does not resist a person or reject a person because of race, or because of color, or because he’s poor, or because he’s ignorant, or because he’s unschooled, or because he’s disabled, or because he’s weak, or because he’s ill, or because he’s unpopular, or because he’s despised, or because he’s an outcast. God does not resist or reject a person for any of those reasons. God does reject people, but He rejects them because they are sinners. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins will die. It’s appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. That’s why God says through the words of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 44:4, “O do not this abominable thing that I hate.” Don’t do it. So, that’s the character of sin.

That leads to a third question that we probably don’t have time to answer tonight, but I think we’ll at least kind of introduce it to you. How many people does sin affect? What is sin? What is sin like? How many people does it affect? Turn to Romans 3. I remind you, 1 Corinthians 15:22, “As in Adam all died.” Romans 5:12, “By one man sin entered the world and death by sin because all have sinned.” Wherever there is death there’s sin. And everybody dies so everybody’s a sinner. We understand that. But look at the most direct statement to that effect, Romans 3 verse 10, “As it is written,” and this is taken predominantly from Psalm 14, the first three verses, “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.” Now, that’s it.

That's it.

Go down to verse 19, "We know that whatever the law says, the law of God, it speaks to those who are under the law that every mouth may be closed," and that is to say there isn't anybody on the planet who can make a successful argument in his own defense. Every mouth is stopped before the law of God, which we've all violated, and all the world is accountable to God. There is none righteous, not even one. Universal evil. There is none who understands, universal ignorance. "The natural man understands not the things of God, they're foolishness to him," 1 Corinthians 2:14. No one is righteous, not even one, and that's added because somebody would say, comma, except me. So, the Holy Spirit said: no, not you. Nobody. There's no one who seeks for God. There's no one who does good. There is not even one, says verse 12, not even one.

And that's verse 23 then summing it up, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." So, that answers the question, it's a pretty simple question: how many people does sin affect? Answer: everybody. How many people die? Everybody. Do you know anybody who's not aging? Well, there's a lot of people trying to fight it in a lot of ways. That's all right, but do you know anybody who's not aging? Do you know anybody who is perpetually 21? Do you know anybody who doesn't grow older? Everybody's dying, everybody's dying, everybody. And everybody dies because everybody is in sin.

Sin is the defiling, degenerative power in the human stream. That's why David in Psalm 51 looks back and says, "In sin did my mother conceive me." He doesn't mean he was an illegitimate baby, he means, at the point of conception, I was a sinner. The time of my conception, I was a sinner; the time of my birth, I was a sinner. I came into the world a sinner. And if you're looking to find my sin in the DNA, it's not there. You can't see it in a test tube any more than you can see my sin in an x-ray of my brain. And aren't you glad when you have an MRI that that thing can't read your thoughts? There isn't any way to x-ray a thought. There isn't any way to find your sin in your DNA. You can only find that in the mystical reality of who you are. We're all dying, so we're all sinning.

Now, not everybody is as bad as they could be. Not everybody is as bad as everybody else. Not everybody is as bad as possible. But everybody is bad enough to be damned to hell. And everybody is incapable of meeting God's standard. What is God's standard? To be as morally perfect as God is and perfectly obedience to His law. If you are not as perfect as God and you've ever broken His law, you're subject to eternal death.

Universal death indicates universal sin nature. Universal sin nature implies sinning. You understand that? Death implies a sinful nature; sinful nature implies sinning. Somewhere down the road in the past, somebody brought this in to the human stream. And we now know who it was. It was that Adam and his wife, Eve. You say, "Ah, I wish they hadn't done that." You want to know something? If they hadn't, you would have. So would I.

Well, we've looked at what is sin, what is it like, and who is affected by it. I want to answer a couple more questions next Sunday night. The fourth question: what does sin do to us? This is really interesting. What does sin do to us? And then, lastly: how did sin come to affect us? That will take us in to the sin of Adam, and we'll get back to Genesis 3. And when we get in to it, you're going to be fascinated by what is there.

Can I close by saying this? Don't shut down your mental faculties at this moment. I almost feel like I should have preached these sermons today in reverse. I preached on repentance this morning and sin tonight. It really goes the other way, right? This morning we were asking you to repent. Well, tonight we told you what to repent of. Isn't it wonderful to know that with all of that reality about who we are, God forgives sinners? That's the glory of the gospel. As you heard in the testimonies so clearly tonight, the glory of the gospel is: all of this is true about us, and this is exactly who we are, and this is exactly what we deserve, eternal punishment. But the fact of the matter is, God has placed our iniquity on Christ. A great reality. He bore our sins in His own body. He was made sin for us. So, God punished Him in our place. That is the glory of the gospel, isn't it? If you come to God and ask Him with a truly penitent heart, believing in Jesus as your substitute, ask God to forgive your sin, He'll hear that prayer and answer it. Amen.

Father, thank You for a great evening, great day. And such great truth from Your profound Word. We are eager to acknowledge our sin, as David said, his sin is ever before him. Lord, we never can escape the reality of it, and we continually confess it, we continually repent of it, and we continually thank You for forgiving us. And we continually bless Your name and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for bearing our punishment on the cross and dying in our place that we might know life eternal. We praise You and we bless You, in our Savior's name. Amen.

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