

"Sin: Part 2"

Romans 6:23

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Madison, Wisconsin
August 9, 2009

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Introduction:

If you were here with us last week, then you might remember that we started a two-part series of lessons on the subject of SIN. We considered a passage from the book of **Romans** concerning something that nearly all of us have in common. **▶▶PPT▶▶** We learned that we live in a land, and we are part of a congregation, where we have come from many backgrounds—our ancestors have come from all over the world. We come from all different economic backgrounds. Some of us speak different languages, but the Bible says that there is at least one thing that nearly all of us have in common, because in **Romans 3:23**, the apostle Paul says, “...*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” And the price of sin is enormous. Just a few chapters, later, in **Romans 6:23**, Paul went on to say that, “...*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” And so we find that the payment for sin is death. We put these two verses together, and we quickly discover that all of us deserve to die for what we have done. And yet in spite of this truth from the Bible, many people still do not understand what sin really is.

- Last week, then, we looked at **what sin really is**. According to the Scriptures, sin is what happens, first of all, when we cross the line. When God says, “**Don’t do this,**” and we do it, then we have stepped across the line, we have sinned. This is exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were put in a perfect situation, they were basically given one thing not to do, and they did it. They crossed the line. And then secondly, sin is also portrayed in the Scriptures as missing the mark. In other words, we may set out trying to do God’s will, and yet due to human weakness, we miss the mark. We aim for God’s perfection, but we miss it. This is the word that was used in **Romans 3:23**, “...*for all have [missed the mark] and [have] fall[en] short of the glory of God.*” We are aiming for God’s glory. We are shooting for perfection. And yet due to human weakness we miss it—we fall short—we miss the target. We fail to reach the standard that God has set.
- Secondly, we also looked last week at **the nature of sin—what is sin like?** We learned that sin is pleasurable, that sin is deceitful, and that sin is progressive. The old saying is true, “**Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.**”
- And then finally, we considered the **CONSEQUENCES OF SIN**. We discovered that sin enslaves, it contaminates, it creates sorrow, tragedy, and scars, and it

also (most significantly) creates a separation between ourselves and God—it forms a barrier, a giant canyon, a break in the circuit, resulting in spiritual death—because, at that point, even with a single sin, we have been separated from God.

This morning, I would like for us to move on by looking together at what happens next. **»PPT»** In other words, once we have sinned, what then? A lot of times, we wish we could take it back. A lot of times we feel regret almost immediately—maybe we get caught, maybe we see the destruction and disappointment that our sin has caused—and sometimes we wish we could just take it back. When we were kids, sometimes we would call for a **“do-over.”** But in the absence of a do-over, what should we do? What do we do once we have sinned?

This morning, then, I would like for us to study several ways that we should **NOT** try to handle sin, and then I’d like for us to close by looking together at **God’s way** of dealing with sin. And again, since there are a number of Scriptures, I will put most of the references on the wall, and I would encourage you to beat me to each one!

I. **But first of all, let us consider SEVERAL WAYS THAT WE SHOULD NOT HANDLE SIN—SOME OF THE WAYS PEOPLE HAVE TRIED TO HANDLE SIN—BUT THINGS THAT REALLY WILL NOT WORK.** **»PPT»**

A. **Among the many things that people have tried to do is to simply RENAME SIN—to REPHRASE it in terms that are not as offensive as “crossing the line” or “missing the mark.”** **»PPT»**

I am reminded of a cartoon where two men are talking over a fence as a vicious looking dog is doing everything to get out. The man on the outside is looking over the fence with wide eyes as the owner says, **“Oh, don’t worry about the dog—he chews up the fence, he chews on the swingset and the laundry. He won’t listen, he digs up the yard, he loves biting people, he barks all the time, and the kids are scared of him, but he’s a really good dog!”** No! He is not a good dog! Just because the owner says that he’s good does not mean that he’s good. As Jesus said in **Matthew 7:17-18**, **“So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.”** And so the lesson is: You judge a tree by its fruit, and simply calling something good does not make it good.

We think back to the Pharisees who refused to care for their elderly parents. They had the resources, but they held those funds aside, they referred to that account as **“Corban.”** **“Corban”** is a word meaning **“dedicated to God.”** So here were religious leaders refusing to take care of their own elderly parents, and they referred to it with a religious word! In **Mark 7:13**, Jesus said that they were **“invalidating the word of God” by their traditions.** They were sinning, but they had switched the label. Jesus had to point out that changing the word does not change the sin. As Isaiah had said many years earlier in **Isaiah 5:20-21**, **“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for**

darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!" And so some have tried to deal with their sin by simply renaming it something not quite as offensive, and yet that does not work!

B. Perhaps others will try to deal with their sin either by making it legal or by APPEALING TO CIVIL LAW IN THEIR DEFENSE. »PPT»

And so some will argue that if it is legal to get drunk in the privacy of your own home, then it must be fine in God's eyes as well. The same can be said of abortion and divorce. And yet as Christians hopefully we understand that government and God do not always see eye-to-eye on things. Just because something is legal in the eyes of the state does not mean that it is legal in the eyes of God. For a very recent example, we think about a special declaration made by our president less than two months ago—a proclamation directly from the White House on June 1, 2009, "**NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2009 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month**" (www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-LGBT-Pride-Month/). And yet I hope we realize that just because the government says something is okay, that does not mean that it is really okay. We need to remember the words of King Solomon in **Proverbs 14:34**, "*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.*" And so instead of taking "pride" in certain behavior, we really need to be more careful to consider God's will on the matter, because appealing to civil law is no defense.

C. Perhaps others will try to deal with their sin by taking it to some kind of religious council and VOTING ON IT. »PPT»

So often, we hear in the news that a major denomination has had their annual conference or council and they have taken a vote to accept some behavior or some practice. You can go on-line to the [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) and find many examples of this. In their own material, they will freely admit that baptism was originally immersion...but over time, basically, we changed it. They will freely admit that the early church worshiped for hundreds of years with purely vocal music—congregational singing with no instrumental accompaniment...but over time, basically, we changed it. We took a vote, we got together and had a council, we elected a new pope, and suddenly what was once a sin is now good! And so the idea is that the majority can make a ruling and that the ruling now determines God's opinion on the matter!

And yet we remind ourselves this morning that the standard of right and wrong is the will of God, not the will of the people, not the majority. At no point in history has God ever taken an opinion poll to determine what is right and what is wrong. But instead, the opposite is true. In fact, you could often come closer to the truth simply by siding with the minority on many issues. We remember the words of Jesus in **Matthew 7:13-14**, "*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and*

there are few who find it.” We remember: If God had taken a vote in the Garden of Eden, the vote would have been 2-0 in favor of eating the forbidden fruit. But as it was, Adam and Eve had transgressed God’s law. A public protest or vote or opinion poll will never change the will of God.

D. Perhaps others will try to handle sin by trying to JUSTIFY or RATIONALIZE WHAT THEY HAVE DONE. »PPT»

Years ago, I remember hearing a kid try to justify throwing trash on the floor at school by saying, ***“You know, if I didn’t throw that on the floor, then the custodian would not have any work to do—he would not have a job. So, I am actually helping the man by giving him something to do so that he keeps his job.”*** No! And yet I sometimes wonder how our own excuses sound to God.

We think back to the Garden of Eden. After the first sin, God confronted Adam, and Adam said, ***“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”*** Then, the Lord went to Eve, and Eve said, ***“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*** And so we find that both Adam and Eve tried to excuse or rationalize what they had done.

Many years later, God told King Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites—to kill everything—man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.” King Saul, however, brought the king back alive, along with some of the animals, and he was confronted by the prophet Samuel. King Saul said, ***“I have carried out the command of the LORD.”*** And Samuel responded in **1 Samuel 15:14** by saying, ***“What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”*** And King Saul then said (in **verse 15**), ***“They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed.”*** You see, King Saul tried to rationalize his behavior—he blamed it on the people, and then he claimed that he only did it so that he could make a sacrifice to the Lord—even though he had actually transgressed the Lord’s commandment. The excuse was worthless, and King Saul was eventually removed as the king of Israel. It was in this context that the Lord basically responded by saying, ***“I would rather have obedience than a sacrifice!”***

E. Perhaps others will try to handle sin simply by trying to get away with it. »PPT»

About two years ago, a man by the name of Alexander Roy claims to have broken the unofficial transcontinental driving record, racing from New York City to the Santa Monica Pier in 31 hours and four minutes in 2000 BMW M5. The trip was 2,795 miles, which works out to an average of 90.1 MPH. The trip was well-researched and was planned mile by mile to avoid tolls and to avoid as much traffic as possible. All together, they only hit four tolls and three or four red lights and had only one scare of a possible police stop in Oklahoma. According to the article I read, the highest speeds (up to 160 MPH) were reached on stretches of empty road in the late night and early morning hours—assisted by night-vision cameras with thermal imaging

monitors to reveal animals, obstacles, officers, and even potholes that were not visible to the naked eye. The car was equipped with four GPS units, police scanners, a CB radio, a radar detector, laser jammers, stabilized binoculars with day and night vision, as well as an air-to-ground radio to keep in touch with a Cessna overhead—flown by a friend who helped guide them across the Midwest. Well, they got away with it! And I would suggest that some people are trying to do the same thing with sin—pushing it to the limit, sometimes making intricate plans, and then just hoping that they never get caught—hoping that God doesn't notice! And yet according to the scripture reference in this morning's bulletin article, ***"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion"*** (**Proverbs 28:13**). Concealing sin is not a Biblical way of dealing with it.

F. Perhaps others will try to deal with their sin by TRYING TO BALANCE OUT THE EVIL DEEDS WITH A GREATER NUMBER OF GOOD DEEDS.

»PPT»

Several years ago, I went to hear a lecture by the first Islamic Imam ever hired as a chaplain by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, and in his speech, this is basically the way he summarized Islam—if you do any bad deeds, then those deeds must be outweighed by the good deeds. And at the end, if the good outweighs the bad, only then you will be allowed into paradise. And yet in the New Testament, perhaps you can remember the example of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion. The Bible says in **Acts 10:2** that he was, ***"...a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually."*** He did many good things that others did not do, and yet at the end of that chapter (in **verse 48**), the apostle Peter commanded Cornelius to be baptized. In other words, the good deeds done by Cornelius were not enough to get him into heaven, but he had to be baptized for the forgiveness of his sins.

G. And then finally, perhaps some people will try to handle their sin by continuing in it while APPEALING TO THE GRACE OF GOD. »PPT»

And yet again, we know from the Scriptures that to continue in sin while appealing to God's grace is to abuse the grace of God. As Paul said in **Romans 6:1-2**, ***"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"*** A more comprehensive passage is found a little further on in the Bible, in **Hebrews 10:26-31**. The writer of **Hebrews** is referring to the danger of forsaking the assembling of the saints together—he's talking about the danger of ***"skipping church,"*** and then he says (starting in **verse 26**), ***"For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we***

know Him who said, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.' And again, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.' It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

II. So, we have considered several ways we are NOT to deal with sin, but before we close, we need to consider GOD'S WAY OF DEALING WITH SIN. **»PPT»**

A. First of all, we find that GOD RESPONDS WITH LOVE—not just any kind of love, but the kind of love that does whatever it takes to make things right. **»PPT»**

I am reminded of a judge whose own son is accused of a crime and stands there in the courtroom with a pile of evidence against him. In order to preserve justice, the father cannot simply dismiss the case, and so he rules by passing down the proper sentence, but then he steps out from behind the bench and He pays the penalty Himself—He takes the punishment on His son's behalf. In perhaps a slightly similar way, we deserve to die for our sins, but as the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:23, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* The Lord, then, has stepped into our shoes, and He has taken the punishment that we deserve. As you might know, the Scripture reading this morning is my favorite verse in the entire Bible—2 Corinthians 8:9, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."* We deserve to be spiritually poor, but the Lord stepped into our place and has made us spiritually rich. In fact, the blood of Christ is the ultimate proof of God's love. As Paul wrote in Romans 5:8-9, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."*

In other words, our sins are forgiveable! God has made it possible! And so now the ball is back in our court—do we accept that sacrifice? How do we respond to a Judge who would offer the life of His only Son as a payment for the sins that we have committed? How do we react to that?

B. Well, THE BIBLE HAS GIVEN US A PLAN. **»PPT»**

God's plan is summarized on the back of our bulletin every week. First of all, we must hear the gospel, and we need to be old enough to understand it. As Paul wrote in Romans 10:17, *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."* By reading the word of God, we come to have faith in Jesus. As the Lord said in John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* Once we believe in the Lord, we continue listening to what He has told us to do, and one of the key requirements in God's plan is that we repent, that we turn away from our sins, that we change the way we live. As Peter told the huge

crowd on the Day of Pentecost in **Acts 2:38**, *“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Following repentance, we must then be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. As the apostle Peter said in **1 Peter 3:21**, *“...baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* And then finally, we need to stick with it. As Peter said (referring to Jesus) in **1 Peter 2:24**, *“...He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”*

Conclusion:

We have considered what sin really is, we have looked at the nature of sin, we have studied the consequences of sin, and this morning we have looked at how NOT to handle sin as well as God’s way of dealing with sin. As we close our thoughts on sin and how to deal with it, I’d like to close with a short story that I first shared here at Four Lakes more than six years ago. It goes back to a little boy who was visiting his grandparents on their farm. He was given a slingshot to play with out in the woods. He practiced, but he could never hit the target, and so, getting a little discouraged, he headed back for lunch. But as he was walking back, he saw his grandmother’s pet duck—you know this story will not end well!

He saw the duck, and just out of instinct he let that slingshot fly, hit the duck square in the head and killed it. He couldn’t believe what he had done—he was shocked and sad, and so in panic he hid the dead duck in the woodpile, only to see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all but said nothing. After lunch that day, Grandma said, **“Sally, let’s wash the dishes.”** But Sally said, **“Grandma, Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen.”** Then, she whispered to her brother, **“Remember the duck!”** So, the young man helped his grandmother with the dishes.

Later that day, Grandpa asked if the kids wanted to go fishing, and Grandma said, **“I’m sorry, but I need Sally to help make supper.”** But the little girl just smiled and said, **“Well that’s all right because Johnny told me he wanted to help.”** She whispered again, **“Remember the duck!”** So the little girl went fishing and the young man stayed to help.

After several days of the young man doing every single chore, he finally couldn’t stand it any more. He came to his grandmother and just spilled it—he told her exactly what had happened. And at that point the grandmother knelt down, gave him a big hug and said, **“Sweetheart, I know. You see, I was standing at the window and I saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgive you. I was just wondering how long you would let your sister make a slave of you.”**

This morning, as we think about our own lives—whatever we’ve done in the past, whatever Satan keeps throwing back at us, whatever it is—we need to realize that the Lord has seen the whole thing. The Lord was standing at the window, and He saw everything. And in response, He wants to set us free. He wants us to know that

forgiveness is available. The price for sin has already been paid. Our response is to hear, and believe, and repent, and confess, and be baptized. If you have any questions, please let us know. If you are already a Christian and would like for us to pray about some situation you are facing in your own life, please let us know and we'd be glad to do that. But if you are ready to obey the good news right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org