

The Sin of Man – Part III

So we started with holiness and then we're jumping into sin. The intent is not to beat you down with sin; the intent is to awaken you to the amazing grace of God as opposed to that smaller version that you previously walked by. So that we Christians walk in the fullness of the abundant life; and thus, instead of continuing in our residual sin with apathy, where we produce dead works, have no abundant life and produce dead testimony, i.e. charged with hypocrisy by the world at large, but instead we exchange that for the life that He came to give us, the abundant life with the fruit of the Spirit and full manifestation. So, in a nutshell, that's why this series evolved. We've been through holiness; today, we'll make it, I think, to the halfway point through sin.

Now we tend to view sin largely as something very bad, done by someone else. But that's a little bit too limiting. In fact, as most of you know, sin just as commonly is something good that we withhold from someone else. Ez. 3:17-21 essentially tells us that when you do not warn someone away from wickedness or unrighteousness that their blood shall be on your hands. In the New Testament, Matthew 25:45 – Jesus essentially tells us, to the extent that you did not do good to one of these, you did not do good to me. So we always need to be mindful that apart from Christ, all sin is capital. That is to say, each and every sin that we commit, if apart from Christ, is fully deserving of Hell. Withholding an encouraging word that we have for another, and being a mass murderer would equally put us in Hell for all eternity, if we remain apart from Christ. So each sin, whether we label it large or small, is rebellion against God. It is contrary to God's will and God's will, theologians divided into many categories, I would simply think of it in terms of, it is His will that we do things according to His character. It is His will that we implement His plan to achieve the ultimate will of fulfilling His purposes. So we are here to glorify God; but we cannot glorify God while trivializing sin because sin is by definition anti-God.

Now habitually, we still cling to the notion that we can cloak ourselves in our own righteousness. Over and over, we hear people say, "well, he's a good man, assuredly he will go to Heaven." But we only need to receive the lesson of Isaiah in the Old Testament when after the Heavenly vision, Isaiah 64:6, he reveals that he received the revelation he was to receive when he said my righteousness is as filthy rags, basically before a Holy God. It's hard for us to intuitively accept, but it is true that if cloaked in their own righteousness, the best of human examples such as Mother Theresa and what we would call the worst of human examples such as Adolph Hitler would both shake hands in Hell, if apart from Christ.

Now in that context, let's look at Job. In Job 1:8, God describes Job as like no one on Earth, essentially a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. And then He turns Satan loose on Job and then Job went through all of the horrendous travail beyond anything that we can even comprehend. But when he sought to confront God with that...remember, he kept saying, if I could just gain an audience with Him, I will argue my case before Him. But God answered him by asking him over 40 rhetorical questions basically centered on the theme of, where were you when I created the Heavens and the Earth? And that's all that we need to know. That's the only revelation we need to know, is that in the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. Then it is His universe and it operates according to His determination, not according to what we determine He should be and how he should do things. Well, Job received that revelation. Behold, I am insignificant. What can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. I spake once, yes twice, but I shall not speak again. I will add no more. And then in Job 42:5-6, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear"; but now he's come into greater intimacy with greater clarity. "Now my eyes see Thee" and when we see God as He is, we do as Job does and we retract and repent and say "what can I reply to Thee?" instead of defending our righteousness before Him, taking offense at Him, basically; by taking offense at God, you do one of two

things. You determine that He isn't here and He ought to be or He is here, but He's misbehaving. That almighty God, Who created the Heavens and the earth, is not doing what I think He should be doing. That is to say behaving as Job did until he received the revelation of that last residual bit of impurity in him that he thought he could argue his righteousness before God. He had that similar experience as Isaiah did in Isaiah 6:5. When Isaiah had that Heavenly vision, remember, "woe is me...woe is me, for I am ruined, I am undone", I am psychologically decompensating, "I am a man of unclean lips." There was no utterance from Isaiah to defend his righteousness before the God. Now, why would he say that? For my eyes have seen the King; the Lord of Hosts. So when we Christians in our New Testament walk have the same divorce rate, the same child abuse rate, the same rate of lying and so on, all it means is we haven't seen the King. We've accepted His grace, diminished our anxiety, fulfilled what Lenin said, that religion is nothing more than the opiate of the masses, and going our merry existence, functioning in self determination, with our eternal destiny secure, but without the Kingdom of Heaven coming on Earth as it was intended to...through us.

So when you see the King in His Holiness, then every perception about you and what you're to become here will change. Your state of righteousness as you perceive it will rapidly change. You will quit arguing your case before Him, you will quit taking offense at God, and never from your lips again will come an utterance, such as, if God will do this, then I would know He loved me. Or I feel so worthless. You don't pronounce your worth, you come to this Holy God and let Him declare your value, because He is the thing that sets the value of all things. So whether we walk in pride or walk in self condemnation, we are insisting on setting our own value instead of coming to the Holy God and let Him declare to us what our value is. So Job had gotten that deeper revelation of the Holiness of God. Thus, he received a greater revelation of the fear of the Lord. The only heart response that can possibly occur when you see the King, the Lord of Hosts, is to walk in awe and reverence of the God that you have just seen. So I believe, though I'm not insisting that you view it as doctrinal, that Job had that residual part of himself that believed that he had somehow earned the right to come before a Holy God and defend his own righteousness. That when compared with all other human beings, he was clearly the *most* righteous, and that he somehow had earned greater blessings on earth. Is not the heart of almost all Christians to agree with Job? To question in our own hearts, how could God do that to the holiest man on earth? We think that Job deserved better than he got. So, let's be sure to learn the lesson that Job learned. We're told in the New Testament that the Old Testament is there for our instruction. The most intense of Job's suffering, as horrible as we regard them, finally represented, Job beginning to get a portion of what he truly deserved based on his own merits when compared to a Holy God. Because God's ways are so much higher than our ways. It's not like Job somehow had narrowed the gap to a tiny gap. The best of human examples walking planet Earth at that time, was woefully short of the righteousness of a Holy God. Job finally saw that no man has earned the right to defend himself before a Holy God, and no man has earned anything from a Holy God, except curses as a prelude to Hell, and that anything other than constant curses is by the grace of God. So no man deserves blessings, and in fact, deserves worse curses than fell upon Job if that man insists on coming to the courtroom of God, cloaked in his own righteousness. If we don't receive those revelations, we will remain lukewarm and apathetic toward the residual sins in our lives. So the truth is, anything this side of the horror of Hell is mercy. So anytime we're tempted to grumble, which is to take offense at God and declare that you deserve better than He's given you this very moment, anything on this side of Hell is mercy. And if you think that you've experience Hell, as horrible as our human situation is, then wait until we get to Hell when we talk about it in greater depth.

We also need to know that all sin is against God. Joseph, in Genesis 39:9 when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife. "How could I do this great evil and sin against God?" David, in Psalms 51:4 when he

began to repent. “Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned.” The children of Israel in Exodus 16:8 – when they grumbled to Moses, Moses said “your grumbings are not against us, but against God.” The prodigal son in Luke 15:18 – “I have sinned against Heaven.” And Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-4 – “you have not lied to men, but to God.” Paul, when he was still Saul in Acts 9:4 when Jesus confronted him, struck him blind and said “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” Well, Saul at that time hadn’t seen Jesus; but he was persecuting Christians and Jesus took it personally. Because what he was doing to Christians was done to Christ. And Paul received the revelation. How do we know? Because later he’d write in I Cor. 8:12 – “and by sinning against the brethren, you sin against Christ.”

All goodness is also done unto the Lord, Matthew 25:37-40 – Jesus effectively said, as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto Me. Colossians 3:23, Paul wrote “whatever you do, do your work heartedly as for the Lord and not for man.” Compartmentalization, is in fact, one of our sins. So the spiritual principle is this. Do not ever try or drift into compartmentalizing your life into the spiritual, and the mundane or ordinary. In the physical world, we know that nature abhors a vacuum. No vacuum can exist in nature of its own accord, because everything around it rushes in to fill the vacuum. The same is true in the spiritual realm. That is why the Kingdom of God is taken by violent men. It takes a certain aggressive attitude to experience the Kingdom of Heaven; because if not, we drift because we don’t defend, because we compartmentalize our lives. The appropriate example is the football field where there is a narrow line of scrimmage separating the two opposing teams. Everybody would consider it utter folly for one team to back off the line of scrimmage, because we know from that simple model that any piece of turf that’s not defended will be taken over by the enemy. So that’s why Scripture says pay attention, lest you drift. Because Jesus paid it all; the only thing we’re left to pay is attention. And when you pay attention, you’ll see that we have a tendency to drift into compartmentalization where we cease to aggressively defend. So the point is this: Don’t ever divide your life into categories of important and unimportant; or unto men and unto God, they’re, in fact, the same for whatever we do unto men is unto God.

So the summary point I would make is this. We tend to think of the battle as an occasional tough time, separated by longer periods of time where we don’t have it so tough. But the battle is a life style, not an event. That’s why we’re told to capture every thought, because when we are not mindful that every thought is either unto God or anti-God, then we will forfeit 99.9% of our thoughts as if they are unimportant.

We can also have sin by simply having a wrong image of God. Now, you’ve seen this poster before. It represents what I believe to be the three essential characteristics of God by which we tend to have wrong perception. To exaggerate the one and diminish the other. There are other attributes of God, but the point is, if we can grasp these three and hold them in balance, the remaining attributes of God will not be an issue. These are the three we tend to exaggerate or diminish. The fierce, but righteous judge - we deny His fierceness because it does not seem loving. Or we deny His loving, seeing only his fierceness and flee in self condemnation. Or, we become comfortable in our salvation because of His love; thus, remain comfortable in our residual sin. But by this we don’t understand that His love of righteousness means that He hates unrighteousness. So the point you’ve heard me make before is, God is love and God does love you; but He doesn’t love only you. He loves righteousness. He loves what He is and if we think of love as a passion for oneness, it means that the passion that He has to remain one with righteousness, is in fact, why He is faithful and true. If God were lukewarm or apathetic toward unrighteousness, how could we ever regard Him as faithful and true? So in fact, that is a major revelation that His hatred of unrighteousness is an expression of love. Because He loves what He is. And He will never approve that which he is not, which is unrighteous. So until we joyfully proclaim,

thank God that He hates unrighteousness, including hating my residual sin, then we have a wrong image of God, we're seeing His love for us as the only explanation of His love; as opposed to seeing that His hatred of unrighteousness means He loves righteousness. Thus He loves righteousness just as He loves us.

So we may see Him correctly as love; but incorrectly as only love. Love of us, and thus not believe that He would send anyone to Hell. I heard a famous pastor, not too long ago, tell me that in a 40+ year pastoral career, he had heard five sermons preached on Hell. Is that not diminishing the essence of God as a fierce, but righteous judge? We may not recognize His hatred of unrighteousness as an act of love, because He wants the best for us...namely the fullness of Himself. How can we seek the face of God, while performing evil, which is anti-God. So the whole thing is, if you're driving from here to Iowa City and Cedar Rapids is not disappearing into the distance in your rear view mirror, you are not going to Iowa City. Wherever you think you're going, you are not going south out of Cedar Rapids. If that is coming closer, that obligatorily has to fade into the distance. So you can't claim to be coming to the face of God, if in fact, sin isn't disappearing in the rear view mirror. He wants communion with us unto oneness—not just union, but unity—oneness. Sin prevents that. You're still going to Heaven; you'll be saved. Yet, so as by fire; because He will burn up the dead works that flow out of your residual apathy and your residual sin. He simply wants sin done away with; not because He doesn't love you, but because He loves you. And He doesn't want anything standing between you and Him. The penalty has been paid for, but how can we expect the Holy God to violate His very character and approve residual evil? How can we expect Him to be happy that we are apathetic toward that which is opposed to His character?

Even when He disciplines us, it tells us in the Bible that He disciplines those whom He loves. Well, why? Well, we tend to interpret the discipline as unloving. We interpret His correction as rejection, rather than what it really is...an expression of love which is a passion to be completely one with us. So God is delighted that we're His children. But He's not satisfied with that. He wants us to reveal to the human race His character. And it doesn't have to come by grabbing people by the elbow and shouting at them. When we're manifesting the character of God on planet Earth, people will say, would you explain to me the reason for the hope that is within you?

The sovereign kingship - we do not see that continued sin is to deny His Kingship in us. We don't see that whatever part of ourselves that we withhold from Him, we are denying His kingship in. And you've heard it said that the greatest oxymoron in the human race is to say, "No, Lord". Because if He were truly regarded as Lord, how could you ever say no to Him? We don't really believe that He cares about our every thought, our every word, and our every deed. We reassure ourselves that He numbers the very hairs on our head, and then pretend that He doesn't care about the thoughts in our mind. Because every thought is either...or. Every thought is either God determined which means He is King, or self determined which means I am king.

See, our every thought is proclaiming something as king. If that thought is self determined, then it fulfills II Cor. 10:5 and becomes a vain imagination that is exalting itself against the knowledge of God. But if that thought is God determined, then it is loosing the mind of Christ that you have within you. Because every thought is going to flow out of the mind of Christ, imparted by the Spirit of Truth as the Holy Spirit bears witness of Jesus. Or is going to come out of your unrenewed mind which is still rooted in the flesh based on self, with the root of that being self determination. That's why we're told to capture every thought. So I would ask you, not in a way that I would want a response, but to ask you in your meditative life, what percentage of your thoughts do you really think represent the mind of Christ

and what percentage of the thoughts represent something coming out of the unrenewed mind with truth being what you declare it is as opposed to truth being what God is and how he views everything else?

Now, we use the word will to refer to the functional part of man that chooses; but it could well be called something else other than will. It could be called our worshiper. Because by choosing, your will declares what it worships. It declares what it holds in awe and reverence. It declares what it holds in highest esteem. It declares what it holds in utmost value. So, think of your will, not as your will, but think of it as your worshiper; because if you don't, then you will think you have occasional blocks of time where you're using your will to worship God and ignore the fact of the greater blocks of time where you're using your will to make choices, but the choices that are being made are all over here under the umbrella of self determination, with truth being what you say it is as opposed to truth being what God is and how God views everything else. Can you see the point that I'm making, about how even by not paying attention, we drift into self determination? And for those of us who were not here in the early part, I'll mention what I mean by self determination. When we go back to Adam and Eve, the original sin, as well as what I believe to be the origin of sin, Adam and Eve violated the one prohibition. Don't eat of the fruit of that tree or you will surely die. And we focus on the fact that they disobeyed the commandment. Well, they did. But that's not the root problem. The root problem is Satan in the serpent, said you surely shall not die. So Satan said, "You eat it you won't die" and God said, "you eat it, you will die." Adam and Eve now had two choices. They're going to be God determined and walk by how God views reality, or they are going to be, not Satan determined, but self determined. To think that when a Holy God says something that they can look at the other options and conclude what is best for them.

So the root of disobedience is self determination. For self to declare that self can even look at the options and determine what is best for self, as opposed to looking at God, listening to God and letting God determine what is best for themselves. And so it has been ever since. For every choice that any human has ever made, it is the choice, the same choice. God or un-God? Same choice. He couldn't make it simpler. Remember, because in the Old Testament starting with Adam and Eve, there were only two choices...eat or don't eat. With the Jews in the Old Testament with the Law, it was obey the law or disobey the law. In the New Testament era, it's either accept Jesus or reject Jesus. And then as saints in the Kingdom, as children of God, we still face two choices...walk in the flesh or walk in the spirit. When we walk in the flesh, the root of the flesh is self and the root of that is self determination. That drive in human beings, to look at all the circumstances and options and think that self can declare what is best for self. When in the spirit, "Oh, get out of here, self determination. It's not even in me to make decisions about my own ways." Remember, that's what Jeremiah told us..."it's not even in man to declare his own ways." And there is a way to man that seems right; but it's end is death. So as New Testament saints, when we walk in self determination as opposed to God determination, then we die. Well, aren't we going to have eternal life with God in Heaven? Yes. But what dies is, we produce dead works, not live works, we produce dead testimony, not live testimony, and we have death to the abundant life. That's why we see so few Christians walking in the fullness of the abundant life. Because they have insisted, probably unknowingly, in walking in self determination in 99.9% of their thought life. And that is what Jesus came to free us from.

Now, why was His yoke easy—burden light? Why was that? Folks, Jesus had fulfilled (what we will get to if we go further in the kingdom) the following. When the Scripture says deny self, I believe what it is telling us is to deny self determination. Deny the tendency in man to think that he can even determine what he should do. And you come over into the spirit realm and truth is that Word of God, quickened by the Holy Spirit where God tells you how He views this reality. And then you walk by that.

See, Jesus had done what we're to do and here's the point. We die to choice, by choice, because we have come to the purpose of choice which is to choose God. So once you've determined, once and for all, to be God determined in all things, you no longer need choice. That's what taking up our cross really is, is a mechanism to where we face the persecution and travail in life and have that constant choice before us. Will I be God determined in spite of circumstances or will I determine what God ought to be doing under these circumstances? And when you give that up, then you only do what is pleasing to the Father. You only do what you see the Father do. You only speak what you hear the Father speak. You see? So you have no need of choice. You have died to self and followed Jesus by being God determined every step of the way, just as He did throughout His time on planet Earth. And He's not just our Savior, He is our model. That's why it says, "Follow Him" instead of following self over here functioning in self determination.