

The Sin of Man – Part IV

Since last engaging in this series, I'm going to zip, zip, zip through some of the early posters, not because I think you're imbecilic and can't recall; but just to get us refocused on some of the ways that I use words and some of these foundational truths. "In the beginning, God..." That very phrase sets God apart as different from anything else in all of existence - the only uncreated thing in all of existence; the only self determined thing in all of existence. And all the trouble of mankind thereafter, is when man declares himself to be self determined. In total rebellion against the simple truth that the God of Genesis 1:1, by definition, is the only self determined thing in all of existence. If we receive that revelation out of Genesis 1:1, it sets God apart as Holy, as "other than". As other than anything else in all of existence that ever has been or ever will be. The other meanings of holy...He is perfectly pure, and holy is anything called holy by the Holy One. This is holy ground. Well, when the other than God of Genesis 1:1 Who created the ground, says this is holy ground, it's holy ground. And no creature is to defy that. Knowing holy also helps us to understand how to resolve certain paradoxes that exist in Scripture. When Scripture tells us, God alone is Holy, Scripture tells us, you are holy as children of God, and Scripture says become holy. Well, if God alone is holy, how can I be holy and if I am holy, how can I become holy?

Well, the key to opening and understanding those apparently, paradoxical Scriptures is to know these three definitions of holy. God alone is other than. But God alone is pure, but we're indwelled by the Holy Spirit and we have the purity of Jesus Christ imputed to us; so in that sense, we are holy. Then be holy is to be transformed by the renewing of your mind because we have unrenewed thoughts flowing out of our minds that are still in rebellion against God, operating in the flesh with self as the basis. So, all three are true. He alone is Holy, we are holy, and we are to become holy. But you can't understand those Scriptures and hold them in proper balance unless you grasp these three understandings.

When you regard God as Holy, you quit trying to define truth as what your natural mind can ascertain - the scientific method and so on. Those have their uses, but they do not bring you to ultimate truth. Because ultimately, since God created the Heavens and the Earth, truth is whatever God is and how God views everything else. So it's water when He wants it to be water and it becomes wine the instant He wants it to become wine. That's truth; although your scientific method cannot deal with such things as that. If you don't define truth as how God views reality instead of how you view reality, then you'll go through life, continuing your rebellion against this Holy God of Genesis 1:1. And when you begin to define truth like that in the light of Who this God is of Genesis 1:1, that's when you're beginning to operate in the fear of the Lord; the awe and reverence of this Holy God of Genesis 1:1. Because if you're not regarding God as Holy, as "other than", and viewing Him with awe and reverence...if you remember, can't be in awe and reverence of the God of Genesis 1:1, you can never be in awe and reverence of anything. And if you can't be in awe and reverence of anything, it means you are in awe and reverence of yourself. Because can you imagine a being declaring that I will refuse to be in awe and reverence of anything? That is self worship.

Then we looked at choice, why God gave us choice. We know God is...in the beginning, God. God is love. Love requires relationship. Relationship requires choice. If I have no right to reject the relationship, then it is not a relationship; it's mechanical, robotic slavery. If relational is choice and if one choice is God, then every other choice is ungod—ungodly. So whatever choice we face, every moment of our human existence, is the same choice. It's either God or ungod; something opposed to God. So, that's part of the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. We think the Bible is complicated, but when we understand that every choice we have is the opportunity to be God- determined or self-determined, then we begin to see that that same choice is the expression and reciprocation of love. That choice is the expression of what we have faith in. That choice is whether we are going to be God-determined or determined by something else. So at its root, it is that simple choice...God or ungod. And it's that the relationship may be that of love instead of mechanical robotic slavery.

Then we define love. It goes beyond caring, beyond effortful caring, beyond sacrificial service into a passion for oneness. That God has saved us; we're born again children of God; we are in His family; but He wants to go beyond salvation and bring us into total oneness with Him. And the process of doing that is to be transformed into the image of Christ by the renewing of the mind. Because every thought we have is a conflict between God determined, with Jesus as the basis, since He's revealed all things to us through His Son, Jesus; or remaining in self determination, choosing ungod. He has an absolute passion to fulfill His love to have us become one with Him, to give up our self determination.

We tried to capture the transcendent majesty of God by breaking it down into bite-size pieces, (and I won't review all of these) but picking the one model of death, Acts 2:24 – it was impossible for the grave to hold Jesus Christ, you see. Not a narrow victory eked out by the power of God barely won over the power of death, but it was impossible for the grave to hold Jesus because of the life-giving power of God. So there is some aspect of the character of God that transcends whatever spiritual or physical circumstance in which you find yourself.

Then the simple math; not old math, new math; just the one math of God. When we view God as Holy, and then we can begin to understand the sin of man in comparison with the Holiness of God, the equal sign is the judgment. So when we're dealing with a Holy God, Habakkuk 1:13 tells us He cannot approve evil. He cannot look on wickedness with favor. A Holy God cannot. If He ever approved a single evil act, He would be evil Himself. And God is perfectly righteous. So, God cannot. So any contrast to the will, the plan, the purposes, the character or the desires of God is sin and that God Who is Holy, cannot approve a single act different from His plan, purpose and character. And the printout on His judgment in that circumstance is the reality of Hell. But the bottom line is where we dwell as children of God. That same Holy God with that same sin of man, Jesus Christ on that cross, took the sin of man and imputed to us then the perfect righteousness which now when we face the judgment takes us right into the reality of Heaven. But that reality of Heaven, although it is our eternal destiny...it begins now.

The kingdom of Heaven... “Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in Heaven” - where the principles that are operational in Heaven are beginning to be operational on planet Earth, through us as His Earthen vessels. We looked at the four frames of reference to begin to understand sin. God is truth; so anything contrary to how God views reality is a lie and is sin. What is not of faith is sin. It's either faith or unbelief in God, obedience or rebellion...God as judge or me as judge. A couple weeks down the road, we're going to take that judging, ours of God and we're going to pound on that until we get to the root of sin, circumcise our hearts, and realize that every thought we have...either God is judge or we are appointing ourselves as the judge of God. So we'll dwell on that in a couple of weeks.

And then the three essences of God. Just about every problem, I think, that Christians have in relating to God comes from a misinterpretation of the three critical essences and how they blend and work together in harmony. We'll either exaggerate His love, and thus, dismiss His fierce judging of evil, or we'll exaggerate the judging and run in condemnation, ignoring His love. So, just let that poster hang there. That's a review, that's what we've covered in the ten weeks or so prior to this point. So, now let's continue in the sin of man.

Remember, I don't pound you about the sin of man to have you live in condemnation; I'm pounding you about the sin of man to have you grow in the revelation of the amazing grace of God; so that we walk in the light of that amazing grace as opposed to presuming that we understand it. Because remember I Corinthians 8:2 – “the man who thinks he knows, doesn't know as he ought to know.” And that's true of Christians, no matter how long they've been saved...one year or fifty years, the moment you think you begin to understand the grace of God, you don't know as you ought to know. So, this is our attempt before the throne of God, to receive the revelation of His Holiness and our sin, and the broad gulf in between covered by the amazing grace of God. So, that's where we're heading and I toss that in so I don't lose you along the way while you think I'm just trying to pound you into some kind of condemnation.

Now, sometimes we, as Christians, feel as if God is distant and we tend to blame Him. Why has God withdrawn Himself rather than blaming ourselves? James 4:8 tells us – draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. So why are we double-minded? Because it allows us as children of God to claim properly salvation while remaining unchanged, living in self determination. You say, “That can't be true.” Well why is it that every poll done, every study done shows that the divorce rate is just as high among Christians as it is among non-Christians. The pornographic addiction on computers is just as much among Christians as among non-Christians. If that is true, then it is true that we're claiming salvation because we are saved while remaining in self determination, not displaying the character of God on planet Earth as is His intent.

Psalms 24:3-4 says “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord and who may stand in its holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.” Well, clean hands of course,

speaks of right actions. A pure heart speaks of right motives. But rather than having us as Christians surrender to God, capturing every thought in obedience to Jesus Christ, and having clean hands and a pure heart, then ascending the hill of the Lord to become one with Him, we prefer to behave, in part, like the children of Israel in Exodus 20:21. God invited all the people to the holy mountain, remember? But it says, “so the people stood at a distance while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.” By an act of the will, they refused to come into the manifest presence of God preferring to remain at a distance. When I was an Army physician, I was taking care of a retired old Navy captain and I was taking a family history and he was describing his daughters and who they married and he said, “Now this son-in-law, Doc, I didn’t mind when he started at the bottom. The problem was, he liked it there.” So we’re kind of that way as Christians. You know, God doesn’t mind when we come into His kingdom, born again, children of God, but the problem is we’re not to live on the periphery of the Kingdom behaving like the world. We’re to come right into the center of His kingdom, manifesting His glory onto planet Earth.

Song of Solomon 2:9 – speaking of the bridegroom relating to the maiden. “He the bridegroom is standing behind our wall.” And I think there is a truth there that goes beyond just the natural explanation. That wall is our pride, it’s our holding back, it’s our insistence on remaining in self determination even though we’re born again children of God, our refusal to surrender to Him. So, we constantly pray to increase our faith. But here’s an analogy I would give you. We try to soar on strong winds of faith like the eagle, while our talons are firmly gripping the branch of the tree of this world. So we like to proclaim our strong faith and ignore our talons. The talons are that drive to maintain self determination, declaring what God is, what He ought to be, and taking offense that He’s not here and He ought to be or if He is here, He’s misbehaving. While we remain in an attitude of judging God, functioning in self determination with our talons gripping the branch of this world, while praying increase our faith and make our wings stronger so we can soar. That’s double-mindedness, you see; and that’s pride even in the heart of Christians. Because pride is to proclaim your wings while ignoring the talons and blaming God because you’re not soaring and He didn’t give you enough faith to soar with.

Well, that’s kind of a telescope looking at the big problem of sin and trying to bring it up close so we see it clearly from what was distant to help us see it more clearly. Well, now let’s take the opposite approach and take something that seems small and magnify it through the microscope to help us understand even more. Now, I’m going to give an analogy of a teenage driver who was arrested for speeding. As you listen to what I say, I don’t want you to listen with only the teenage driver in mind, I want you to look at us and our behaviors, and attitudes as born again Christians, using this as a simple example. So what happens when the teenage driver is stopped by the highway patrolman? “Why, I was not speeding. I was only speeding; I was only speeding a little; it’s not like I was reckless, I was not speeding any more than anyone else, I didn’t hurt anybody, the speed limit here is stupid anyway, I didn’t know that that was the speed limit, I never speed but I was in a hurry just this once, I’m really a safe driver, I’ll not speed again if you’ll not ticket me, you have no right to single me out, your radar must have been wrong, you must

have a quota to meet, and whatever you do, don't tell my parents." Just look at all the different vantage points that that teenager, in what we see as comical immaturity, is projecting and I dare say unto you, I think we do the same thing as Christians.

Look at the transgressions. He's transgressing against the truth, against the law, against the enforcer of the law, against even the legitimacy of the law, against the law having any authority over him, against the authors who wrote the law, against the system that called for the law, against the purpose of the law, against openness, transparency and honesty, against deserving punishment, against receiving punishment if it is deserved, and against his parents who conceived him, reared him, nurtured him, taught him, loved him, bought him the car, taught him how to drive, bought the gas, and bought the insurance - all in rebellion against a ticket from a highway patrolman.

But that's the way sin is in the hearts of Christians, even born again saints, you see. So we are saved, yet so as by fire. That's why we have so many dead works; because it's our self determination to remain, finding every excuse under the sun to excuse residual sin in our hearts. So are you beginning to get the point that I'm trying to convey? It reflects our attitude toward God when we tolerate sin, or resist conviction about what we view as our little sins. Now there's a military saying that familiarity breeds contempt and anybody who has had military experience has heard that. But could that be true of us as Christians? Are we so familiar with God's grace that we now have translated God's grace and call it justice? What is our gut reaction as Christians when we read how God deals with Job, the most righteous man on earth? When God strikes Uzza dead when he just touches the ark of the covenant. Or when God strikes the sons of Aaron, young men dead, for using the wrong incense? Is our reaction, in some way...I would have been more patient than that. I'm not sure that's fair. That punishment didn't seem to fit the crime. If God did it, it must be okay, but I can't say I really agree with it. I don't like that part of God. If I were God, I would not have done that.

You see, is grace such a constant in our lives that we hold it as a given; and thus, through familiarity, come to view it with a certain degree of contempt. In other words, have we ceased to regard grace as amazing? Do we now consider grace as justice and justice as unfair; and therefore, injustice? Now government programs; most of you have followed history in your adulthood, you know they follow a common progression. They begin as a special small privilege, they come to be viewed as a necessity, they are then presumed to be a *right*, they are then assumed and demanded including demanding their progressive enlargement.

So have we done a similar thing with the grace of God? Do we now have a sense of outrage when God's justice is ever released? Do we take grace, which is unmerited favor and now assume it and demand it as a right? Do we forget that no one has ever suffered an injustice from God? That God gives out either justice or mercy, but never injustice? Exodus 33:19 says - "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." It's His universe. He's not obligated to give mercy to any creature. So, do we forget that all Hell is just; and that anything other than Hell is mercy? You see, we have a tendency to settle for and settle into a certain churchly level of acceptable sin. But we need to know that all sin

causes injury to our communion with God. You don't lose your salvation, but sin is a refusal to draw near to Him. So we turn from Him, continuing in our residual sin and blame Him for the seeming distance between us. We've lost the ability in large part to even recognize residual sin. In that case, we become like a person who has lost his sensation, like through a nerve injury or whatever, who then gets a pressure sore, but can't feel the injury. So the tissues are being injured, but he can't feel the injury because he's lost sensation. So in our numbness to the Holiness of God, not functioning in the awe and reverence of that Holy God, we tend to do the same thing. We become numb to our residual sin and numb to the injury that it causes in our communion with our Holy God.

Then we accept residual sin which means we're taking evil and self determining that it's good enough to satisfy God. And instead of making the sickness of sin well by repenting and confessing before our God, we have a tendency to take that sickness of residual sin, declare it as well enough and then declare anyone who get hot after wellness as a fanatic. Then we behave like the U.S. did in Viet Nam as Christians. We quit fighting, lose the victory, declare loss as victory, and then withdraw. Now what would be our behavior if Isaiah had his Heavenly vision and saw God and said, woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips, I am undone. I think most of us would rush to Isaiah and pat him on the back and say, no, you're the most righteous of all of us. You're a prophet, a great prophet, the greatest prophet. We'd console him, telling him how good he was compared to the rest of us. So when a fellow Christian starts to lament his residual sin, it's almost like we can't stand to see him feel badly about himself. We rush to console him, we balance what he's feeling with his fruitfulness to try to convince him that he's not as bad as he's feeling. We tell him that it's really okay, that he's being too hard on himself. We, thus facilitate, not repentance and cleansing, but we facilitate the abortion of repentance which is to be brought about by the conviction of God.

Thank God I was a broken man at age 50, to turn to Him, to realize that I was helpless and hopeless. Remember, the Scripture, I think Isaiah 53 where it was God's good pleasure to crush him? Well, in my pride (I didn't know it was pride); but in my pride that I now recognize, I couldn't turn to God because I was clinging to my own self righteousness. I had to be broken; but that brokenness meant openness and that openness led to God. We can't stand to see somebody broken. We rush to prevent brokenness and call it love. We take our sensitivity and call it love. We forget that we're not here to remain comfortable in our residual sin. We're here to become holy and no one becomes holy without brokenness, including the discomfort, the travail of receiving the conviction of residual sin.

How do you clean a sponge? The cleaner it is, the more you clean it to get the residual dirt out. We look at Job, the most righteous man on Earth. Well he had to undergo the greatest squeezing of any man on Earth. Because any lesser squeezing, he wouldn't have received the ultimate conviction, "who am I to annul the judgment of God? Who am I to condemn God that I may declare myself righteous?" He had to be squeezed to that degree, you see. We complain about the squeezing because we think we're holier than the person who is being squeezed less than us without realizing that we have to have the

greater squeezing to get the residual dirt out. No man cries out for a lifeboat unless his own boat is perceived to be sinking. No man will look to the righteousness of another if he remains satisfied with his own. You see, until sin is seen as sin, grace cannot be seen as grace. So until we see grace and see our need of grace, we can't come to Jesus, or if we come, we can't complete the process by surrendering to Him, capturing every thought to the obedience of God. And we'll try to complete in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit. Although the Word of God, how He views reality, tells us there is nothing good in me that is in my flesh. The only thing good in me is the Holy Spirit of God.

So, we came to Jesus, thank God. We are His children; we are in His family; but that's the beginning of a process, not the end. We came to Jesus, but our lifestyles after, are to be ones of continuously coming to Jesus. Now how we regard that is often given by our testimony. I came to Jesus in 1995...and I did. We consider that a done deal and it is for my eternal destiny in Heaven. But it's not a done deal in regard to how God views me thereafter. That's called progressive sanctification, purification; because He wants me transformed into His very likeness - a living epistle telling a true story of Him, not an untrue story; an Earthen vessel bringing Him and not bringing my self-centered, self determination; an ambassador that represents Him faithfully to the rest of planet Earth, as opposed to representing me rather than Him to planet Earth.

Remember, that Peter said to Jesus, "Depart from me for I am an unclean man." But, we have a tendency to say "I've come to you for salvation, now *You* depart from *me* because I'm clean enough." We embrace salvation while resisting purification. We want the goodies of the abundant life without turning to Him to have the Goodness that leads to the abundant life.

But God is so slow to anger. Can you imagine the patience of God, the forbearance of God? But rather than giving thanks in all things, we tend to be shocked when God does react with justice. We tend to interpret his grace as freedom to tolerate sin. We often settle into that churchly level of self righteousness as if He doesn't know, doesn't care, doesn't matter or sometimes even doesn't exist. That's the point at which we do not acknowledge Him any longer. That's the point at which we do not honor Him as God. We honor Him by reading the Bible, we honor Him by coming to church, we honor Him by coming to a Bible study, but we honor Him as God when we capture every thought in obedience to Him to be God determined rather than self determined, you see.

So we honor Him, but we stop short of honoring Him as God. It's not that God's provision is short, it's that we stop short of God's provision. And then we wonder why so many Christians do not walk in the fullness of the abundant life. So, I think it is true that the constancy of the grace of God has a tendency to have familiarity breed contempt in the heart of Christians. So when we read Scripture and experience a certain degree of revulsion when God's wrath flows, that's in part, the revelation that we somehow regard ourselves as more just than God is. Now remember, an oxymoron. That's a self contradictory statement. We function in the oxymoron commonly of — "I deserve unlimited grace", while forgetting that grace itself, by definition, is undeserved. We tend to ask questions from the perspective of fallen man, "why doesn't our loving God save

everyone? How can a loving God have a horror of Hell?" But we *should* ask in view of the Holiness of God and the sin of man, "Why should a just God save anyone?"

You see, Jesus is the only innocent man ever punished by God and He was punished justly because He volunteered to be punished for our sin - to become sin, to receive the punishment. So anything, remember, this side of hell, is mercy. So all you have to do, when you're in a circumstance leading you to grumble is to ask yourself, "what side of Hell am I on right now?" And if you're on this side of Hell, you're under grace, not justice.