

Core - What is sin and why does it matter. 08/21/2022 Romans 6:23, Romans 3:23, 1 Samuel 8, 2 Samuel 11:1-2, Luke 22:3, Matthew 18:21-35 (credit Phillip Larsen)

We've talked about God the father, we've talked about Jesus, we've talked about the holy spirit, and we talked about humanity.

So if you're keeping score at home...or even alone...you had to know that this one was coming. You had to perhaps even know that it was going to one that was going to be tough. Yet, if we are going to talk about the core doctrines of our faith, we have to talk about this one.

Yes, we are going to talk about sin, what it is, and what it means to us as followers of Christ.

And you know what, as hard as this subject is...as uncomfortable this will make everyone...look myself included...I had to research and write this thing...it is vital that we understand sin and it's seriousness.

**What is sin?** The word itself carries with it a lot of baggage. It is a word that most of us don't want to hear. It is a word that is flung around and has such impact, that to even utter the very word puts people in defensive posture. To talk about sin, to talk about our sin, is to expose the legacy that we are born into and to be reminded about our own shortcomings.

And to be reminded of those shortcomings is to be reminded that we are unable do overcome our mistakes. That runs directly contrary to what are nature is. We have a nature that we want to be able do it ourselves, fix it ourselves, make it right ourselves...save ourselves.

And we can't do it. We can't save ourselves. In fact that nature of wanting to be self-sufficient can be traced to original sin.

One of the things that I've wrestled with with God is the nature of original sin. And in thinking through that story of Adam and Eve in the garden, I have come to the conclusion that although disobedience was a sin that they engaged in, it isn't the first sin that they did.

*Their first sin was to forsake the providence and provision of God and instead pursue their own desires. When the enemy told them 'you can be like God', that was too much to pass up. Original sin is the story of history's first attempt at a power grab.*

And what do you call a power grab that isn't successful...you call it an attempted coup. And what do you call those who engage in an attempted coup...you'd call them rebels. And what does the king do to rebels?

### **Romans 6:23(a)**

I remember reading this part when I was young...death? Man, that's harsh. God has a mean streak.

It would be easy to blame all this on our predecessors wouldn't it. It would make a lot of sense to look at Adam and Eve and say, guys, you really screwed this up. You set us up for failure. We are born into this fallen state, and it's all your fault. Case closed, we are absolved...it's all their fault.

But is it? Is the case closed? **Because, if that is the case, then sin is something that happens to us.** Thus, the effect of sin is diminished, because we aren't responsible for what has happened. Sin becomes a genetic disorder that we inherit in the bloodstream.

If the nature of sin has it's Genesis...in this case literal Genesis...in rebellion, then we have to examine what are exposure is. Because if we examine the areas in our lives where we fall victim to our sin, here's my bet. It's the places and points where we feel like we need to exert control that is not ours.

If the root cause of sin is rebellion, then the sins we engage in have those characteristics as well. The sins we engage in are the places and points in our lives where say to god:

*You know what, I know best. You know what, I got this. You know what, this is not an area that you can come into. You know what, I think I'm just like you in this area...that sound familiar?*

And of course, in this context, and in this level of vague references, it's easy to give an amen to this, amen?

But what happens when we start identifying parts of **our** lives in which God has a foothold to speak.

What happens when we realize that God has given us direction and commands about our money?

What happens when we realize that God has given us direction and commands about how we conduct ourselves at work?

What happens when we realize that God has given us direction and commands about how we treat our enemies?

What happens when we realize that God has given us direction and commands into the parts and places of our lives that we wish with all our might that he didn't give us direction and commands?

And what happens when we look at God and say...get out of my life...it's none of your business?

But lets stay here for a second, because this is a very important point.

***We play with sin. We coddle sin. We allow sin to infiltrate, to infect, to metastasize, and to eventually overwhelm. And we do so, because we have come up with clever turns of phrase to cover for sin. Don't believe me, well, let me prove it.***

Finish these phrases with me:

*It's ok, nobody's...perfect.*

*No worries, everyone makes...mistakes.*

This sounds eerily similar to:

**[Romans 3:23]**

So here is my theory on this verse. And this is just my theory, I'd advise you to work through this part of your faith yourself, but this verse may be the most dangerous verse in the western church.

Why do I believe that?

Because this verse is roped in to these other turns of phrase that I just mentioned. And these turns of phrase that I just mentioned are used to diminish and dismiss our shortcomings.

Since it is just simply too easy for this verse to be roped into these manners of saying.

**This verse is dangerous because it diminishes and dismisses sin as the same thing as forgetting to get spicy ketchup when you go to the store.**

And that is dangerous. Sin is not a mistake. Sin is not something to be shrugged off. Sin is destructive. By its very nature it seeks to steal, kill, and destroy...where have we heard that before.

***Sin takes more from you than you want to give, keeps you longer than you want to stay, require more of you to get out than you imagined, and exacts a toll from you that you never dreamed it would take.*** Because sin is not a mistake. It is an act of rebellion. It is not unlike a declaration of war.

And we see the destruction of sin time and time again. We see that sin isn't a minor inconvenience, but rather a weapon of mass destruction.

We've heard the story of David and Bathsheba. David, of course being a man after God's own heart.

We've walked through the story of where David failed to protect his people.

### **[2 Samuel 11:1]**

To understand this, we have to understand that as king, David's responsibility would be that at the edge of the kingdom, when enemies would encroach on his territory during the winter, David's responsibility would be to beat back those enemies and reclaim his territory. This is the responsibility of the king. David's responsibility would have been to do this.

This is David's first sin. Which, look, he's king...he has military leaders, right. Does David need to be there, maybe. Could he delegated? Maybe.

Was there a pressing matter that David had to engage in that took precedent over this responsibility? Of course not. How do we know this?

## [1 Samuel 11:2]

David is just hanging out. He doesn't do what he is supposed to do and instead stays at the palace because he came to the conclusion: I'm the king, I can do what I want, I don't have to defend my people and the people that God has charged me with protecting because...and wait for it...I know best.

But that's not all. In **1 Samuel 8**, David is warned by a prophet that there was great danger in a king in the future that would take for himself, ignore his responsibilities, and act in his own interests instead of Israel. Whoops.

And we all know what happens. David see Bathsheba...has an affair with Bathsheba...impregnates Bathsheba...tries to get Bathsheba's husband to sleep with Bathsheba to cover his sin (which is also known as consciousness of guilt, if we were in a courtroom)...and then effectively murders Uriah.

We've heard that story. But have you ever heard the rest of the story. Shortly after this episode, Nathan confronts David (taking his own life into his hands in the process) to let David know that he had greatly sinned.

David, to his credit repents, but here is what happens next. David's son Amnon falls in love with his half-sister and rapes her. Amnon's brother brings Amnon out into the country where he and David's other sons murder him. Absalom, another one of David's sons go into exile, but David allows him back into Jerusalem after 3 years.

Absalom, in Jerusalem plots a conspiracy, forming an army and divides the Israelites. David's chief counselor goes to Absalom to declare him king over David.

David himself goes into exile. Absalom enters Jerusalem and defiles the palace...I'll restrain some of the details, but your mind can wander.

David, in exile, and through some good fortune of bad decisions by Absalom, musters an army where he stages a counter offensive against Absalom. Absalom catches his head on a branch of a tree and one of David's warriors ignores David's instructions to spare Absalom and kills him.

David takes back Jerusalem, and chooses to spare the followers of Absalom, but that angers some of the other people in his counsel. David does rebuild the throne through diplomacy and military victories, but it is not clean and not without a great cost.

So the sin that David committed...where he thought he knew best...resulted in a good portion of his family killing each other...an uprising...a civil war...and then him rebuilding his kingdom under strained circumstances.

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Want another one, I got another one. How about one of the 12. How about Judas.

Judas, who saw EVERYTHING that Jesus was. Saw the miracles...saw the people...saw that Jesus was who he said he was.

In all the stories in the gospels where Jesus empowered the disciples...guess what, Judas was empowered as well.

Judas...was in. He was in the circle. He was one of the 12.

Oh...to be in that circle. To see with our own eyes...

So there is a theory about the messiah during the 1st century. The theory is that Jesus was going to oust the Roman oppressors and to establish a Jewish kingdom here on earth. That Jesus was going to reclaim what David had...and do it more awesome-er...because he's Jesus.

So...again...one of my theories here, so take it for what it is worth. Judas subscribed to that theory. Judas wanted Jesus to become king...and to be an advisor of the king sounds like a pretty sweet gig.

So...Judas...in the three years of following Jesus...gets antsy. Wants to move things along. Why isn't Jesus doing what I think he should do. Who does this Jesus think he is.

Then, in **Luke 22:3**, scripture says that Satan entered Judas.

How do you think he does that? What is the foothold that Satan uses to get one of the 12 to betray him?

Again, my theory, so take it for what it is worth...he uses the same card that he always plays.

“What is Jesus doing, man?”

“Why isn’t he raising an army”

“You think these fisherman can take on the Romans?”

“If he’s truly the son of God, then you’re going to have to do something to make him show off and show out...you’re going to have to move to back Jesus into a corner...and if he’s the son of God, he’ll defend himself. You need to do this, because Jesus isn’t going to. This has to happen...and you’re going to have to do it. Plus, a little change going jingle jingle in your pocket won’t suck. You have to do this, because...you...know...best.”

My theory, Judas thought he was helping Jesus move things along...so did a high risk maneuver...because he thought that Jesus was more than powerful enough to defend himself...and he wanted to be a part of the new order coming to Jerusalem.

Of course, we know what happens. Judas agrees to betray Jesus...leads to the Romans and the Sanhedrin to Jesus. Jesus is arrested and crucified.

This is not going to plan for Judas. Jesus was supposed to show of his divinity. He was supposed to Thanos snap his enemies, and Judas was going to be in the room where it happens.

This spun out of control. And Judas knows it. He tries to unring the bell. He goes to the Sanhedrin, tries to give the 30 pieces of silver back.

*Which side bar...you know how much a years worth of labor of a slave was worth in the 1st century...30 pieces of silver. Talk about being a slave to sin...I don’t think that’s a coincidence.*

He is turned away. And in his despair...Judas hangs himself.

***Sin takes more from you than you want to give, keeps you longer than you want to stay, require more of you to get out than you imagined, and exacts a toll from you that you never dreamed it would take.***

Why is this important? Why is it important that we know the implications of sin. Why is it important that we examine what we are capable of and what sinning truly means.

I mean, this isn't fun. This isn't a fun message so far. It's not a dabba doo time to talk about our sin...our rebellion...and the destruction that is rightfully ours.

We talk about this for one simple reason. Because we must know seriousness...and we must know the cost.

### **[Romans 6:23]**

The wages of sin is death...it's destruction...and it is mass disaster...it is utter despair...it is a civil war against a holy God...but thank God the that the gift of God is eternal life.

*We are given life through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. And the cost of that redemption is that the same sin that destroyed the house of David...the same sin that destroyed Judas. The same sin that levels destruction wherever you see it in scripture...is relieved.*

And when we realize all of this, we look at this parable that Jesus told us in a brand new light.

### **[Matthew 18:21-35]**

We have been forgiven so much. The cost of our sin level an extraordinary cost...and it was forgiven.

And this is why the concept of cheap grace (credit Bonhoeffer) is so infuriating to me. Because grace is many things...amazing, comprehensive, unfathomable, incomprehensible, complete, etc... But one thing it is not is cheap. Grace is costly. It costs the precious blood of my Jesus...so miss me with your cheap grace.

Miss me with your cheap grace when we dismiss the comprehensive destructive nature of our sin, and shrug off it's implications. Because when we rationalize or otherwise dismiss sin, we look at Jesus and say...one more cup of your blood to be poured out, please.

Miss me with your cheap grace where we look to bring our plans to God and ask him to bless it, rather than seeking his will for our lives. Because when we bring our plans to have God bless them after the fact, it is no different than us telling God...you know what, I know best.

And miss me with your cheap grace where we accept the beautiful gift that is God's grace and mercy...where we are forgiven much...where we are brought into the kingdom of God as adoptive sons and daughters...and then have an unforgiving heart for either real or perceived slights. *We as believers don't minimize the comprehensive nature of sin, but we are also obligated to exhibit the same level of grace that we are given.*

We are a people who should be the most gracious and merciful, for the amount of grace and mercy that we are given is beyond measure. It is to demonstrate the cost of our sin and to demonstrate that that cost has been paid...that is the gospel, ladies and gentlemen.

We put these pictures, these distractions, this papering over what sin is. That is the problem. We'd rather discuss anything else than our sin...and we'd rather think of anything else than what our sin ultimately costs.

In that light...our response is actually laid out. We recognize the burden of our sin...but we recognize that the burden is lifted. We revel in the incredible gift that we are given...that the cost of our sin...the destruction of our sin...is no longer our responsibility to carry.

And when we come to that realization...what sin is...how destructive it is...and the cost of it...the thought of our own sin becomes revolting to us...and the thought of the willingness so Jesus to take on that cost because clarified...and it is magnificent.

That's what Jesus is such a big deal...because our sin was a big deal. And we are freed from that bondage to focus on the grace that we have been given. (notes and concept written by Phillip Larsen)