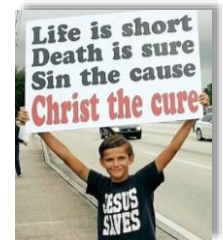


[Teaching today: Pastor John Lawley]

Hey guys, good morning. Hey, so, everyone cold? Warm? How we looking? Okay. So I'm a little cold, I had my coat on but now I gotta come up here so I took my coat off, but it's good to see everyone. I am Pastor John, if you don't know, I'm one of the pastors here. I'm going to be teaching the Word of God to you this morning and we are talking about sin. Aren't you excited? [HE LAUGHS] Okay. So it's going to be a good one, but I have a story I want to tell real quick before we get going. And I just want to say to everyone who's new with us – thank you for coming. Hopefully you feel loved and feel like this is a community you want to be a part of. If you have any questions, there's a Blue Wall located out here, we'd love to connect with you afterwards. We also want to say hello to everyone online, I know many of us watch online when we're not here or we can't come for whatever reason, so we love you and miss you.

So when I was in college I lived in Lancaster for a couple years with my older brother and I remember we had like a singer-songwriter kind of band thing. And I remember one time we were driving in Lancaster city and there was a truck and it had a bumper sticker on it and it said this: LIFE IS SHORT. DEATH IS SURE. SIN IS CAUSE. CHRIST IS CURE. I thought, *I like that bumper sticker; that's a good bumper sticker.* And actually later on they wrote a song about that actual quote. But I remember they always stuck with me: Life is short, death is sure, sin is cause, Christ is cure.



And many of us if we grow up in the church we understand sin. If anything the church would often point out our sin. Right? So we had a pretty good understanding of sin. And in fact, some of us when we talk about God's story that we're all in—and by the way, we're all in God's story. So God's story is one where no matter what you say about God you're in it and you will—and I say this often—you will bring God glory no matter what you want to do. So you will bring God glory through His grace and forgiveness offered on the cross, or through judgment, and so you will bring God glory. But we are part of God's story. And often we start with sin, don't we? We say okay, you are born sinful—we're gonna talk about this because you are—but you are a sinful, broken person and God sees you as this sinful, horrible person, but if you confess you have a relationship with that God who doesn't like you forever – aren't you in? Right? Something like that. Some of us grew up in that type of thing, *Well, I guess I'll repent... but God thinks I'm a sinner.* And, like, that's sometimes the story that we were told and they don't package it that way but you get what I'm saying? That's a very highly legalistic framework.

But, in fact, the story, God's story, doesn't start with sin, it starts with relationship. Do you know that? That you were created to be in relationship with God. And, in fact, Scripture starts with God creating man in His own image and what does He say? It is good. And so that's God's intention, that's why you were created is to be in relationship with the Lord, and I would argue that's the greatest longing for your heart is to be in relationship with God. That's why you're created – to be in right relationship with God.

So what the story is, God created you to be in relationship with Him, that's your origin, but sin entered the world and what happened? In sin, sin separated us from that relationship. What happened when Adam sinned? Adam chose the desire of his flesh and that separation occurred. And what happened with Adam? He became ashamed and Eve became ashamed and they hid and they put clothes on. They were aware of that fractured relationship, even though God, what did He do? He was looking for them. And so sin separates us from God; a perfect holy, just God can't be in relationship with sin. And so what happened? Death entered the world, sin brought death, and then what happened? Study the Old Testament, every time you see God telling His people, *Listen, you are my chosen people, stay near to me* – and what do they do? They run away. Only for God to have covenants and promises to pull them back into close relationship and to protect them from

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wandering out into sin and being separated from Him because He had a promise to do what? To come in flesh.

So we know in sin you see this history of separating, people choosing the world, choosing the flesh over the relationship with God and it brings about destruction. So that's why we have war and famine and greed and power and all of these things because we turn our eyes away from what we're made to be in. And so that happens in the world and what does God do? He comes in the person of Jesus, wraps Himself in flesh, and He restores what? Our relationship with God. How? By dying on the cross He restores that broken relationship so that those who believe now have access to that relationship again.

But what happens after that? Guys, we're part of the story! So that's the "already." Everyone who believes in Jesus we are part of the already that happened, we claim that, we live in that, that's a promise that God has given us, that those who place their faith in Jesus now have a right relationship with God, because He doesn't see your sin anymore, He sees you as a pure lamb of God. He sees you because of Jesus. That's the promise.

But listen, listen, wait-wait-wait! The story gets better. So now we are in the already, but the "not yet." Because what happens in the end? What happens at the very end of the story? Does politics win out? Does government win out? Does the Antichrist win out? No. God comes back. Jesus returns and sets all things new – new Heaven, new earth, reconciliation occurs, [CHEERS/APPLAUSE] so, and I'm not even getting started, and so what happens is we go back to what? Right relationship and God looks around at the end and says this is good for eternity. That's the story we're in. We are in the already and the not yet.

But, but sin is a big deal. And, in fact, sin is one of the core theological concepts of our faith that we need to understand. Sin is real and if we do not think sin is a big deal, then the cross is not going to make any sense. And so what we're going to do here is ask three questions and then we're going to dive into it. First question is this: What is sin? What does Scripture teach us about sin? Theologically, how do we wrestle with the different types of sin? How it affects our lives. Second question is this: Why is that a problem? And so my goal simply is this—for those who don't think sin is a big deal—to make it a big deal. And then the last one is: How do we overcome it? You ready? Okay. Let's go.



So here's the biggest thing that I want you guys to wrestle with is as we approach the idea of what is sin, know that our culture doesn't talk about sin. Have you guys ever wondered that? Like, how many of you have a conversation with somebody outside the church that has sin involved in it? Like, you talk about sin, especially with the unbelieving world. Do you even hear the word *sin*? After a couple weeks of talking about the enemy, do you wonder why? So here's how the world sees it – right? – there's two ways. One is if you say something sinful, well, the world we live in that worships themselves is gonna say that's judgmental, that's closed-minded, that's legalistic, don't you dare say that I am sinful and point out my sin. Right? Maybe they even know that whole law reference and they'll say something like that – fair?

Or—we really like to do this—or Christians like to together say, *Look how sinful the world is*, and so we like to look at movies and TVs and things and people and especially Hollywood and music, *Oh, look how sinful they are*. We love to say look how sinful and kind of point out how this world is so sinful. And here's what I'm saying this for, I actually am not interested in talking about either one of those things, what I'm interested in talking about, because I think this actually is where growth happens, is for us to talk about *our* sin. So my goal this morning is for you to kind of put a mirror up and say okay, I'm going to actually talk about how *my* sin—and this is the promise here—will destroy every significant relationship in my life if left unchecked. Sin will lead to death every time.

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Now for believers remember this – grace abounds – so the goal is not for you to feel guilty about the things that we all can probably bring to the table about our past, that's not the goal. If anything, the struggle is to see ourselves worthy of forgiveness. Right? That's the hard part. So it's not to make you feel guilty, but it's to make you feel convicted to say I'm never going back there again and I understand the weight of sin in my life, and I understand the consequences of that sin in my life. That's the goal. And so I want us to talk about the doctrine of sin and I want to look at it as the idea of okay, how does our sin, my sin, impact my life, and most importantly the relationships in my life? And so you are ready? Okay.



What is sin? Let's look at it. So sin is more than just breaking rules. Sin is more than just if you don't lie, steal, cheat then you're not sinful. In fact, sin is missing the mark. So biblically, if you can kind of think of an example, a common one would be like if you're shooting a bow and arrow and there's a target, sin is literally missing the mark. There's something that you are striving to do and be and you're not doing that. And so in short, sin is anything that separates you from God is sin. He is the standard and so anything that takes your eyes off of Him, anything that is not according to His will and His plan for your life is a sin. And sometimes it doesn't look like it but it will destroy. That's literally what sin is.



But biblically speaking, they kind of have some categories. So there's personal sin and so look with me in Romans Chapter 3:10, here's what it says:

¹⁰ as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;"

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

– ROMANS 3:10 & 23 (ESV)

So there's personal sin meaning it's very clear that there is not a soul in this room that has not personally chosen to worship something over God. In fact, I would make an argument there's probably not a soul in this room that hasn't done that this morning. And so we all fall short. There isn't less sinful people than others, we all fall short, there's no one righteous, not one. And so you have committed sin meaning that just if there wasn't even inherited sin, there wasn't sin of Adam that you're born into, if it was just you, *you* deserve Hell and God would be completely just. That's where we are. And if you see yourself as worthy of then you do not have a proper understanding of sin, you have a shallow view of sin, and I would argue that view of sin the cross doesn't make sense. For the cross to make sense sin has to be deep. And so we all fall short and we all put Him on the cross. That's personal sin. We are all accountable and without a Savior we are judged according to our actions, we deserve Hell. And here's the thing, this is something you gotta wrestle with, eternity in Hell would be just.

What do you mean? You're telling me if I made a little sin eternity in Hell is just? That doesn't sound right. What if you have a low view of sin? You hear what I'm saying? If a perfect all-knowing God sees it as just – guess what — you don't see sin for what it is. You think sin isn't a big deal if you don't think that as just, because my God is perfect and He says it is. Are you wrestling with that with me? Okay. So that's what sin is. Sin is rebellion against God. Anything, certainly lies, but anything, anything you worship, anything you place before the Lord, that's personal sin.

And then there's inherited sin. Look with me at Scripture, so this would be considered theologically original sin, sinful nature, it says this in Romans 5:12:

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¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

– ROMANS 5:12 (ESV)

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world and Adam's sin brought upon death, you see this? So death spread to everyone for everyone has sinned. It says in 1st John 1:8¹:

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

– 1 JOHN 1:8 (ESV)

And so not only do we sin personally but we have a sin nature which means we are not born good, and our parents, our culture, the things around us make us bad – that's the lie of the enemy. You're actually born with a sinful nature meaning without the Spirit of God, without somebody stopping you, you are going to gravitate towards sin and destruction in your life. You're going to run after the flesh, that's your nature. So you actually don't just need somebody to give you good advice, you need transformation, you need to die to something that you can't die to without Jesus. You are by nature sinful which means good religious behavior doesn't do anything without Jesus. All that will happen is you will potentially look good on the outside but be sinful on the inside, and the best you can accomplish is hypocrisy. So you are sinful by nature.

So the goal is not to just stop sinning, you need transformation. So these are the two things that we talk about in Scripture that are promises to us that we are going to choose to sin without the Spirit, without grace, and we are going to be prone to do that. We're going to be prone to what? Wander. Timothy Keller has this great quote in the book called *The Reason for God*, he says this: "According to the Bible, the primary way to define sin is not just doing bad things, but the making of good things into the ultimate things. It is seeking to establish a sense of self by making something else more central to your significance, your purpose, your happiness, than your relationship with God." Anybody? This is what sin is.

And so here's the problem, here's the problem, that is relational; that type of sin causes destruction in every relationship in your life, and I would argue that's why it's a big deal. It's not just a big deal because it hurts *you*, it will destroy every significant relationship in your life. Sin brings death – every time. And so let's flush that out why that's a problem. Well, because sin fractures the relationships with one of the most important if not the most important people in your life which is each other. Think about it, what does sin do in our lives? What fractures our relationship with each other? So when we sin, we're ashamed, and because we're ashamed we don't talk about it, and because we don't talk about it we don't have community.

Like, for example, how many people in this room know that you need gospel-centered community in your life but you are afraid to go in it because you know what you just did that last week? And you're dirty and you're sick and you feel that when you're around them, and so because of sin what happens? You isolate, you become ashamed, and the very people that you need to point you back to Jesus you don't want to be around. Why? Because guilt and shame is attached to how you act. How many of you teenagers have no desire to go to youth group because they know what you're like in school? And because of that you don't want to walk in there because you live in hypocrisy and you don't want to be confronted with the fact that you aren't actually walking according to what God wants you to walk with, the shame is too much. So you push yourself [GESTURES AWAY] by the very community that you probably need to help you go towards Jesus, and so it fractures relationships with each other, relationships in the church. But most

¹ Transcriber edit/correction: 1 John 1:18 was incorrectly stated in the sermon video, it's verse 8, not 18 – 1 John 1:8.

importantly what does it do? It fractures our relationship with God. What does sin do? Sin says, *God, I don't want to pray to You, I'm ashamed. God, You must not love me because if You knew what I've done* — even though the Bible says while you were still a sinner Christ died for you —

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

– ROMANS 5:8 (ESV)

— so his posture is love and He knows everything. But we think or the enemy tells us God's not interested in your prayer because of what you just did, God doesn't want you in church. Because when you're in church and people are worshipping all you're doing is you're just being afraid because you're gonna be found out eventually and so you're just trying to navigate until you're found out. And then you're gonna bail, so you're just filled with fear rather than worship, filled with guilt rather than grace, and so you don't want to worship the Lord. Not that you don't know you need Him, it's because the enemy takes that sin and says you're not loved by Him anymore, and so you believe that and then it creates shame and it creates more distance from the Lord. In fact, the very thing that you need.

But it doesn't just fracture our relationship with the Lord, which is the most important and our relationship with each other, do you know that sin fractures this world? Everything in this world is affected by sin and it is being destroyed. Death exists because of sin. So here is the truth, church, is the answer to the problem of what is wrong with the world is sin. Okay, that sounds vanilla. No-no-no-no. That's the answer to the question. Well, what do you mean? The answer to what's wrong in the world is not a political ideology because guess what, political ideology with human depravity attached, guess what — not going to save the world. And every human system, every human corporation, every person in this world whoever says, "Let me lead," if they haven't dealt with sin they're in trouble, they're in trouble because they are prone to what? Sin, destruction.

That's why—young people, look at me—that's why when you look at the world and you see war and famine and abuse and destruction everywhere you look, that's why if you actually open your eyes and you study human history you'll see nothing but what? Genocide, war, murder, and you wrestle with this idea, *Is God good if the creation around us is destructive?* The answer to that question is God desires what? Relationship, and He's going to do what? Reconcile. Why are we seeing those things? Sin. It's because the world we're in has turned its back. All of this that we see in our lives is an effect of sin and God hates sin. Well, what do you mean He hates sin, then why doesn't He do something about it? [HE POINTS AT THE CROSS] [APPLAUSE] You get it?



So here's the thing, sin doesn't just affect your relationship with God, making you ashamed and guilty even though you're loved and forgiven; sin doesn't affect the relationship with each other because you actually, because of your sinful nature, your flesh, you begin to use other people and destroy the relationships in your life. So they destroy relationships, but here's the thing—they also leave generational impact, generational consequences here. Big deal. Okay. You're telling me that alcoholism in a family only affects that person? Are you telling me that sin only affects you? So many of us right now are bearing the weight of a family destroyed by people that chose to go after their flesh, and in grace we are able to still rejoice and say, "God can make all things new," but the burden of saying, "This isn't how it's supposed to be," most of us in the room are living in that world. And outside of glory where we're

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heading we're gonna have to navigate that. Sin has consequences and it's generational, it's weighty. Sin destroys relationships, it's a big deal. It's a big deal.

And so what the answer isn't is okay, if I sin I'm just going to confess it and continue to sin. That's not the answer. If it destroys relationships we need to fix or to be delivered by it, and I would promise you we can't fix it. You are not going to wake up today and say, "I'm not going to sin today. I have a strong will." Actually, your nature is to sin, so what do you do? What do you do with the fact that you're angry and you know that your anger is destroying everyone around, you know that, man, what do you do? How do you fix that?

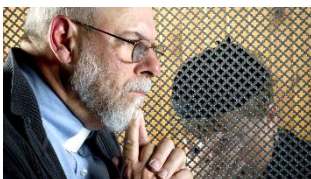
This is where we're going to get into the idea that isn't it amazing that as we believe in Jesus it's not Jesus died for us so that we could be right with Him, but He gives us something, and He gives us something for a reason. Because sin destroys relationships and that's what's wrong with the world, but here is... it's the point – right? – life is short, death is sure, sin is cause, Christ is cure. This is the cure part. Okay. Sin is directional. What does that mean? Okay, what are we made for, church? You paying attention? What are we made for? Relationship with God. This is the primary treasure of your heart. This is what you long for. This is what you try to find in everything else, but you are made for relationship with God. That is the center of your life. I have a quote here I want to read, I'm going to grab it here real quick, Simone Weil, he says, "All sins are attempts to fill voids. Because we cannot stand the God-shaped hole inside of us, we try stuffing it full of all sorts of things, but only God may fill it."

Okay, sin is directional. What does that mean? You are made for relationship with God, this is what you were made for. Adam and Eve and you said okay, I'm gonna turn and I'm gonna try to see if the things God made will fill that void. This is what it looks like, okay, practically, follow me. Okay, I have this void inside of me and it's getting deeper because I'm walking away from this [GESTURES THE CROSS], but what if that relationship can fill that void? Man, I saw this movie one time and I want that relationship because it looks like they're satisfied. So you get into a relationship with somebody else thinking that will fill that void, but guess what, church, it doesn't. So then we say, you know what, that career is going to fill that void, and so you take one step further away from God and say maybe it's that career, I'm going to compromise, I'm going to do things that I know God says not to do, but maybe it's going to fill that void and then it doesn't. What if children fill that void? I get children and you get all these things and they don't fill that void. What if it's the way I look? Okay, I'm going to look a certain way and you get all those things and it doesn't fill the void. And if you're smart you'll recognize at that moment that people don't fill voids.

But – but the enemy will say, "Then you need to numb it." Okay. I'm gonna drink it away... but it's still there. Okay, I'm gonna medicate it away... it's still there. Well, then I'm just going to blame people in my life, they're causing me to do that... but it doesn't go [away]. Because sin when turned and going towards the world will never fill that void. But here's the problem – you will never turn around without the Spirit of God. You'll never turn around.



But here is what repentance is, church, repentance is not as you're going towards these things, "God, I'm sorry." [TAKES A STEP AWAY GOD] "God, I'm sorry." [TAKES ANOTHER STEP AWAY] "God, I'm sorry." [TAKES ANOTHER STEP AWAY] That's not repentance. Repentance is not telling some other guy what you did. That's not repentance. It's not. You've been deceived. That's a box that you can check that does not save you from going further and further away from what you were made for.



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You know repentance is? Repentance is: I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins, Spirit of God help me to turn around. [APPLAUSE]

And here's what it looks like, here's what it looks like—when you turn all the consequences of your actions are still going to be there, they're all going to be there, but here's the thing, in that grace abounds. You're loved but now you're just gonna walk towards that love. So then, here's practically how it looks, church. Okay, the relationships I had in my life were all meant to make this [THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD] look fun and they're all pointing me this direction [TOWARD THE LORD]. Okay, now I've got to bring relationships into my life that make me go this way [TOWARD THE LORD]. So people that say no-no-no-no, don't go this way [TOWARD THE WORLD], go this way [TOWARD THE LORD]. Okay, so now I change the relationships in my life. The patterns in my life are all meant in all shapes and all built to take me this way [TOWARD THE WORLD]. I've got to change these patterns to take me this way [TOWARD THE LORD], because the more steps I take toward here [TOWARD THE LORD] I would argue the more healing happens here [THE CONSEQUENCES FROM LIVING ACCORDING TO THE WORLD]. And the more I go here [TOWARD THE LORD], the more I'm gonna find the satisfaction that I tried to find here [IN THE WORLD] in my relationship with the Lord. And when I get close enough I'm gonna be able to love the people I harmed good enough so that they do what? They turn around with me.

Because here's the primary purpose of your life is to see Jesus as your Savior which turns you to desperately need the Spirit of God every day because when you wake up you're like this [FACED FORWARD/DECISION TIME] and you can wake up and say, "I got this" which goes this way [TOWARD THE WORLD], or you can wake up and say, "Spirit lead me," which goes this way [TOWARD THE LORD]. And then as you get closer here's the transformation, as you get closer and closer you become satisfied. Guess what – you're not gonna be angry at your wife anymore because now you're satisfied in the Lord, you can love her unconditionally. You're satisfied which means now you stay there [AT THE CROSS] and yes, there'll be times when you'll look back, but here's the thing that's so powerful about repentance, because God's relationship with you will transform your desires.

Men – look at me – do you want to have victory over pornography? You know how that works? It's not going this direction [TOWARD THE WORLD] bringing other people around you that are also tempted in that direction because that doesn't work. You know why? Because you all ultimately have a desire for that. You know how you actually have victory—and the enemy doesn't want you to know this—is the more you get close to the Lord, the less you will desire it. *Lord, let those things be like vinegar in my mouth.* So God, if I see them the way You see them then I will no longer dehumanize them; but if I don't see them according to how You see them but according to the flesh, I'm going to be stuck. You don't think that's true? It's so true. Father, give me the desires of your heart. Things that you once desired will become undesirable. Anybody testimony to this? That the things you once loved make you sick.

How? Man, because God is making all things new in me. Lord, because—have you ever wondered, okay, logically, follow me, do you ever wonder why there's no more sin in Heaven? Because you're here [HE WALKS OVER TO THE CROSS]. What's Heaven? Full relationship with the triune God. We don't desire sin, we're satisfied, so when you're satisfied with Him, guess what – sin becomes disgusting. But if it's I love this [THE WORLD], I like You [JESUS], sin will grow and grow and grow and grow. So repentance is no-no-no, I'm turning away [FROM SIN, FROM THE WORLD].

And here's the purpose of your life—you ready?—as you're in relationship with God and you feel that satisfaction and that joy, you turn around to everyone else in your life and you say what? "Turn around. I've gone that way." – that's your testimony – "I've been that way. IT'S HERE!" [THE CROSS] It's not unless you change your behaviors,



you don't get this [THE CROSS], it's no-no-no, you get this [THE CROSS] despite where you are. So if you're here, you need it [HE STEPS ACROSS THE STAGE]; if you're here, you need it; if you're here, you need it. You are drowning, I am drowning, here's the raft—that's the Gospel.

So in this sin is directional, but repentance is directional, too. It's directional. It's waking up every day of your life saying to yourself, *Okay, Lord, I need You to help me keep my eyes on You because that's where my soul is desiring to go. That's what I need. And the closer I get to You, the more sin is further away from me.* So what happens then practically if sin is growing in your life? What do you do with that? Well, I just told you, you stop and you ask yourself the question: Where am I going with this? Am I trying to overcome it myself? Good luck. Am I leaning into the Spirit of God? Am I pulling people around me who are going to point me towards that direction?

People that aren't married yet, practical advice: If you want to find a spouse worthy of spending your life with them, walk this way [TOWARD THE LORD] and if somebody's walking this way with you introduce. What you don't do is you don't walk this way [TOWARD THE LORD], see somebody walking that way [TOWARD THE WORLD] and hope you can pull them. *You* walk this way [TOWARD THE LORD] and you look around at who's with you. That's life. That's what it looks like to be in repentance.

Now, are you less loved in any of those stages? No. No. But are you going to be lonely and angry and filled with anxiety and shame and guilt if you don't go this way [TOWARD THE LORD]. Absolutely. And the enemy's going to be so happy that you're not walking in the gift that God has given you. What does the cross do for us? It allows us to turn the way that we were created to go. That's why when you see Peter before the Spirit of God it's a different Peter. Peter before the Spirit was dealing this way [TOWARD THE WORLD] he was fearful and anxious. What happens after Peter gets the Spirit of God? He turned and he went this way [TOWARD THE LORD] the rest of his life. Did he not sin? Of course.

Paul – right? – why do I do the things I don't want to do? You know, I want to go this way—what is he doing? He's wrestling with his flesh and the more Paul wrestles with his flesh the more Paul has to say Spirit, I need You to turn me here [TOWARD THE LORD]; I want to go here but the flesh is still around. This is what it looks like to overcome sin in our lives. That's what it looks like, church, but I have to promise you something, the sin that you are right now in will destroy every relationship in your life. Know that.

ROMANS 7:15-17 (NLT)

¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

That's why, when given the opportunity they were talking about grace and they said well, shouldn't we just sin so that grace abounds? Like, it's good to sin because the more sin we have the more grace God's giving. And what does he say? By no means! Why? Why, when

ROMANS 6:1-2 (ESV)

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

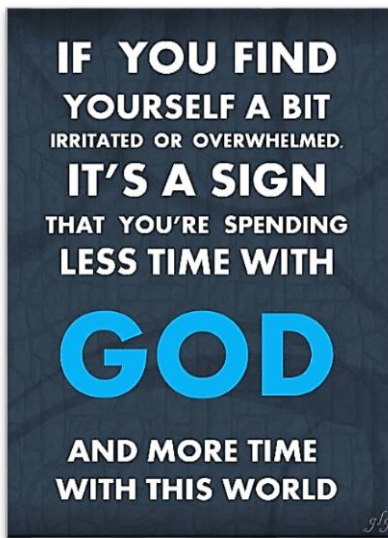
you have a path towards God, would you ever choose to walk away again? Why? You've been given the gift, the wall has been broken, you have access to what you were created for. Before you were trying to just fill your void with anything you had, now you know who it is that ultimately fills it and you're going to run away from Him? How dare you. That's going to lead you to destruction. God

loves you too much to let that satisfy you. And so that's why I can promise you it's going to lead to destruction. God loves you too much to have these things be fruitful in your life because if they're fruitful, you're never going to turn around.

So why are there hard things in my life? Listen, sin left unchecked can do what? It could lead to death, physical death. How many of you can atone to people that you love that were all consumed with sin to the point where it took their life? And the weight of that, knowing how much they're loved but they were

deceived. And so sin left [unchecked] is going to destroy regardless of what we say about Jesus. It's a big deal. And so our heart should be one of repentance. And again, repentance isn't just saying something, it's surrender, it's transformation; it's I need You to change these desires in my heart, I'm not just going to pretend to be okay. I need You to take me from this person to this person and only You can do that.

And for some of us in this room we've never heard sin like that, we've never saw the weight of sin like that, we've never even wrestled with that, but I tell you the truth right now, today, I would challenge you to turn, to turn. Some of you right now in this room—and I know this, I know this—you can't even look at the person next to you, that's how much guilt and shame you're holding right now. But here's something that I want to say to you, but if you say with your lips that you are under grace and forgiveness, that you love Jesus, you say that to your family but you're so prideful and that you can't confess and repent before them, you're not teaching them Jesus, you're teaching them to be pretend perfect person. Which, by the way, is the reason most kids run away from the church.



What if you say in this room right now, "I tried religion and that didn't fill the void for me, John. Religion didn't fill that void for me so I went after the world because this thing you said fills me didn't fill the void." Here's my argument: What if you never went towards the Lord, just the people? What if I agree with you that religious people are not going to fill that void—they were never meant to. What if the religious people who all they did was point out your hypocrisy and not point you to that direction [TOWARD THE LORD] weren't even in love with Jesus in the first place? What if you missed Jesus and you were distracted by the people?

What if you turn and go back and no longer look for the community to fill that void, but look for the source of why that community is gathered? Because no not once did any created thing fill that void inside of me—never—but when I met Jesus and I've tasted and seen that He is good... listen, after that this is the testimony we all should have, after that any time – and it happens – any time I start stepping this direction [AWAY FROM THE LORD] I remember, I remember, and eventually I stop and I say,

"What am I doing?! It's here [AT THE CROSS], I know it's here," and I turn back.

This is what David does. David's not a sinless man but what does David do to make him a man after God's own heart? He turns, quicker, "Okay, help me, Lord, help me to stay here. I'm going to worship You. I'm going to think about You. Lord, help me. I have to..." and this is David's life. All his life this is David [STEPS TOWARD GOD/AWAY FROM GOD]. But what happens? He gets closer as he's quick to repent, as he's quick to say I need Jesus, I need the Lord, I'm not spending enough time with the Lord. That's why these things are happening.

Why am I so angry and abusive to the people in my life? It's because I'm not spending enough time with Jesus and that's who I am without Him. But guys, what happens when you go towards the Lord? What fruits are produced in your life? Peace, patience, kindness, these are the fruits of the spirit, gentleness, self-control. You don't think that's going to transform your family?

And so right now here's what I want to do, I want to call the band up, but I want to challenge you guys with a couple things as they come up. Here's a couple challenges I want you to think through: Is there something right now in your life that God is calling you to confess to the Lord? A posture of repentance? And here's what it is, it isn't just, "God I did this," it's "God, I need You to take this from me. I need You to take this from me. I've tried and I've tried but I have not done what You've called me to do. Maybe I've tried to think I could fix it myself. Maybe I've tried to think that the world's gonna help me fix it, but

that's not gonna work. Father, I need to confess these things before You because I know even though right now it doesn't look like it's going to destroy things, like, I have convinced myself that no one knows about it and so it's going to be okay. God, I know that it's going to bring destruction, it's just a matter of time."

And those things you give to the Lord and you say Father, they are chasing me away from You and I want to be in relationship with You. Help me to have a heart to step towards You in that relationship. Help me to be able to look around my life and see the things I do and ask the question: Are they taking me towards the Lord or are they taking me away from the Lord? And don't let me be a person that says it's not a big deal. Lord, if it's not a big deal then this [THE CROSS] wasn't necessary and because that was necessary I'm never going to say sin is not a big deal again. Because when I say that it undermines your sacrifice and I'm never going to do that again. I'm going to wrestle with it.

And I'm not going to be guilty in that, I'm going to be convicted in that. I'm gonna wrestle with it knowing that I'm loved despite the wrestling. And in that I'm gonna ask myself this in life, I'm never gonna say, *If I just do this I'm gonna be satisfied*. I know that if I'm far away from You that is what needs to happen, I need to turn back. And I'm always going to think that way. I'm never ever going to say the problem in my life is my spouse ever again; the problem in my life is my co-worker, the problem in my life is my children, the problem in my life is somebody else. The problem in my life is sin and sin causes me to run away from the relationship that I desperately need. So the problem in my life is I believe that I know more than God. I'm gonna repent and confess I don't and that I desperately need Him because He pursued and made a way for me to be in relationship with Him, and that's the desire of my heart. I need to be close to God because when I am all of these things will be restored, because that's His heart. His heart is restoration.

So if you're in a marriage right now and you're far down the road and you think it's impossible, I'm going to challenge you to say nothing is impossible. The more you turn and go towards Him watch what happens, watch what happens. But here's the hard part, it's hard to turn because you need the Lord, you need a lot of humility, you need a lot of honesty and brokenness and confession – that's hard. Why? Because our sinful nature is that of pride, but as you humble yourself before the Lord and you ask for His guidance—and it's not just one time, it's daily—you begin to see Him transform your life. You're going to begin to praise Him more. You're going to see His faithfulness in all of those things you thought were lost that He restores.

And that's why a life of a believer isn't one of waiting. Though we're in this weird, awesome place of already and not yet, we're not having to wait to know what eternity looks like, church, because the closer we get to God the closer we get to what's going to be there in eternity. So guess what our job is as believers it's very simple spend every day going this direction [TOWARD THE LORD] more and more. God, I want to know You more. That's where I'm heading. That's what's going to satisfy me for eternity, so I'm going to go that direction until I'm with You. But as I do that, Lord, I'm going to turn around and the people that are going the opposite direction, I'm going to take the time, the energy, the resources to help turn them and point them towards You.

So guess what – my family is no longer going to be about building my kingdom and my castle, it's going to be about can I help my children learn to turn. So it's not about how well they did in that sport, it's about how did they glorify God in that sport? It's not just about my kids getting A's so they can get in a good college so they get a good house that they'd be satisfied, because you know that you don't get satisfied there, it's just about your children fulfilling their purpose that God's created them no matter what that looks like. So everything in my life, everything in my life I'm gonna work on turning.

SIN

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Why should you lead your family in devotions every night? Why should you spend time coming to church being encouraged and worshipping? It's not a rule-based religion, it's a relationship. How close are you right now? That's what you're meant for. I'm gonna in close in prayer and I'm gonna ask you to consider this truth, we began with it, we're gonna end with it: Life is short, this is a reality that we all face. Some of us right now we have faced death of people that we love and we're reminded of that every day. Death is sure. Death is a result of sin, everything broken in this world is a result of death which was brought about by sin. Sin is the problem. Life is short. Death is sure. But Christ is what? The cure. Sin is the cause; Christ is the cure. We are to continually share that message with the world every day. That's why we are at church, that when you come in here our sole purpose is to remind you of that relationship that you're meant for and to offer you a way back to it. That's what Jesus is. Let me pray.

Father,



We love You. And Lord, I pray right now as we worship You, we worship You in light of that truth that, Lord, Christ is cure. Help us to be a people longing to be back in relationship with You. And Lord, at the very beginning You have set a plan in motion to restore all things. Thank You that we are part of that message, we are part of that story. And Lord, right now we thank You for all of the weight of forgiveness that is in this room, all of us have been forgiven greatly, Lord. So because of that we should worship greatly. You are worthy of our worship, Lord. so help us to do that well for your glory and honor. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



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