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*The Words, Works, and Person of
Christ*

The Gospel of Luke

The Sinfulness of Sin

January 29, 2023

Sermon Text: Luke 5:8

Scripture Reading: Luke 5:1-11

Isa 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. (2) Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (3) And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (4) And

the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. (5) And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Luke 5:8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

There are many ways in which man the sinner minimizes sin. He does not see it – and we do not see it – for the deep and terrible evil that it is. R.C. Sproul, if I recall, has a sermon entitled “Cosmic Treason” (we will have to watch it in the Sunday morning class soon). That is what sin is. Cosmic treason. Treason on a cosmic level –

“**Cosmic:** characterized by greatness especially in extent, intensity, or comprehensiveness”

But man tends to minimize it – to see it as something not so serious, and when we sin we are doing this very thing. Consider:

- Eternity in hell for the sinner (be honest now) is seen by us to be a bit of overkill on God’s part. If the punishment must fit the crime then surely hell is “cruel and unusual punishment.”
- Many accounts in the Old Testament of God striking down the wicked – think of Hophni and Phineas, for the simple act of offering fire from someplace other than the altar – many such accounts are seen by us to be some kind of divine temper tantrum, or written off as fiction.
- The flood
- God ordering Israel to wipe out Canaanite cities and kill everyone there

And here is one for you – J.C. Ryle wrote about it in a book of bible stories for children:

2Ki 2:23-24 He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!” (24) And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.

Stories for children – and yet I have no doubt that many, many professing Christians today would call for a pastor or Sunday School teacher to be fired if they told that story to children.

Why? Because human beings, including many who claim to believe the Bible is God’s Word, are guilty of minimizing *sin*. And as we have already said, all of us are guilty of this. In fact, I suspect that in this present life it may be even impossible for us to truly grasp the sinfulness of sin. Why?

Because it is not possible for us in this life to fully grasp *the holiness of God*. The more we see of God's holiness, that He is as Isaiah proclaimed, the holy, holy, holy God – the greater our sight of the depths of sin will be.

Think very seriously on this – do you ever dismiss sin as in some cases being rather comical? Do you ever make jokes about sin? We all have, and yet just one “little” sin – like that of Adam and Eve taking a bite of fruit – was enough to plunge the entire race into the condemnation of God and introduce into the universe every form of suffering and evil and curse that this world has been in bondage to ever since.

“What kind of god would pronounce death and a curse upon the entire creation simply because the first man and woman ate some fruit they weren't supposed to?”

And so the Bible is dismissed and mocked. But-

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God

is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. (8) For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Or consider still another example of how man sees sin as not so sinful and God's word being a great exaggeration:

“Are you telling me that I am supposed to believe that good, moral people who work hard and help others are going to hell just because they don't believe in Christ?”

Make no mistake. Many, many professing Christians embrace a brand of universalism which says that such “moral” people will surely arrive in heaven. That somehow Christ will overlook their unbelief and save them because, after all, they were pretty good. And yet-

Joh 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever

does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Heb 12:25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

The Sinfulness of Sin

Sin is defined in the Bible this way

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1Jn 3:4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; **sin is lawlessness.**

Here is this *lawlessness* stated in the Shorter Catechism-

14. What is sin? Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Here is more about the sinfulness of sin found in our Confession:

Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

The wrath of God. Cursed by God. Miseries and death both temporal and *eternal*. How people rail against such notions! Why? *Because they refuse to believe the utter sinfulness of sin.* Sin is not seen as all that serious, because God is not seen as all that holy.

Jas 1:14-15 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Here is Ralph Venning writing in the beginning of his *The Sinfulness of Sin*, helps us see it:

The sinfulness of sin not only appears from, but consists in this, that it is contrary to God. Indeed, it is contrariness and enmity (ie, being an enemy) itself. Carnal men, or sinners are called by the name of enemies to God (Romans 5.8 with 10; Colossians 1.21); but the carnal mind or sin is called enmity itself (Romans 8.7).

Accordingly, it and its acts are expressed by names of enmity and acts of hostility, such as:

--walking contrary to God (Leviticus 26.21),

--rebellng against God (Isaiah 1.2),

--rising up against him as an enemy (Micah 2.8),

--striving and contending with God (Isaiah 45.9),

--and despising God (Numbers 11.20).

It makes men:

--haters of God (Romans 1.30),

--resisters of God (Acts 7.51),

--fighters against God (Acts 5.39 and 23.9),

--even blasphemers of God, and in short very atheists, who say there is no God (Psalm 14.1).

Sin goes about to ungod God, and is by some of the ancients called Deicidium, God-murder or God-killing.

[Venning, Ralph. The Sinfulness of Sin (pp. 11-12). Monergism Books. Kindle Edition.

Therefore, sin is utterly sinful for several (many) reasons. Here is another: *Sin is utterly sinful because it grows, and what it grows toward is not a harvest of life, but of death. Eternal death.*

Let me illustrate:

About two weeks ago Verla told me "I have some news, and it isn't good." Ever hear someone say that

to you? It's like, "Oh no. Someone died." In this case it was worse (not really) – there was water dripping out of the circuit breaker panel on our house! So the mystery began.

The panel is on a shared wall with the compartment where the water heater is, so we initially diagnosed the issue with the pressure relief valve must have malfunctioned and set off some steam. So, we replaced the water heater (no small project or expense). There, problem solved.

Nope. More water condensation in the circuit panel and now you could even feel a little tingle of electricity when you touched it. Not good. (And all the while you are hoping it will stop. Maybe residual moisture? Stupid thought)

Time to cut open the sheet rock. Dry above, not coming through the roof. But below – the insulation was wet and so was the 2x4 framing. And right at the bottom of this wall was a drilled hole where the wires from the panel went under the house and off to various circuits in the house. But...also

right on the other side of that wall was where the hot water line from the water heater went under the house and off to various appliances throughout the house. There had to be a leak right there.

Time to crawl under the house. Miserable place. Stick with me now – we are going to get to *the sinfulness of sin*. When I crawled under there, what did I see – water. And there were numerous places where it was dripping out. Understand manufactured homes – All the plumbing and electrical are hidden behind layers of insulation and that insulation is held up with what is called the "belly wrap" fabric. You can't see the problem. Surgery is required. And it is *hard* to get to. I saw that the hot water line by the electric panel was leaking but it could not be accessed from under the house. I could see it, but not reach it.

So, back to the outside, crawl under the back porch, saw some skirting away and after quite a time of pulling away insulation and feeling in there, I found the leak – hot water spurting in a small stream.

And I felt something else. That leak was caused by a rodent having chewed through the water line. We shut off the hot water supply line and power and I went to work fixing it. Verla crawled in there too. It was no easy job but we finally got the damaged section cut out and a new piece spliced in.

There, problem solved, leak fixed. The other drips surely were due to water from this one leak running inside that belly wrap. Nope.

As the next few days went by and I crawled under the house to pull down all the wet insulation (which will never dry and will end up rotting the wood floor joists if left there) guess what? There were other leaks – 6 more in fact all along the length of the house. And EACH ONE was caused by a rat chewing on the line. It took several days of wet, dirty work in the dark to repair each leak and pull out the rest of the wet insulation. I will still need to do some more cleanup.

What has all this to do with the sinfulness of sin? Well, sin is

utterly sinful *because it is a rat*. It destroys, and in its beginning, *it does its work in the darkness, unseen, gnawing away inside of us where it is hidden and even multiplying*. What do I need to do to solve our rat problem under our house? *I need to kill those rats. Kill em. All of them. No mercy. So now there are traps and poison pellets under there and I am going to keep a close eye on what is happening down there.*

Rom 6:16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, **which leads to death**, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Sin is a rat. It is a plague that kills and destroys and if, as James says, it is left to come to fruition, to finish its work – that finished work is *death*. Sometimes physical death. Always spiritual death. It loves to work unseen in us if we permit it to do so. It must be killed.

The old biblical word for this killing is *mortifying*. Here it is in the KJV -

Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Rom 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Rom 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Kill it! Think of the Black Death plagues that wiped out, was it 1/3 or something like that of the population of Europe. How was it caused. Rats. Fleas on rats. Sin is utterly sinful because it is a Black Death on the soul. It is a much more dangerous enemy than even the bubonic plague. It kills the *soul* if left unchecked. It kills eternally.

What is the only sin-killer that is fatally poison to this rat called sin? It is Christ. Without Him, unless you are born again, unless you are in Him and His Spirit is in you, then *nothing you try will kill the rat*. In fact, the sinner's own efforts to obey God's law without Christ only *energize the rat* –

1Co 15:56-57 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law**. (57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Like rats under your house, sin is easy to dismiss. After all, so often it is out of sight, out of mind. It disguises itself. Rats are cute. People have them for pets. People often don't want to be "cruel" and kill them so they use live traps and release them elsewhere!! But sin must be killed. It must be put to death or it will kill us. It rots the foundation if left unchecked.

In man the sinner, and even in the Christian's own remaining corrupt flesh, the sinfulness of sin is so often ignored. We can turn a blind

eye to it. Repentance is painful. It requires us to deny our lusts, yield ourselves to the Spirit of Christ within us and follow His lead. THAT is how we mortify sin.

The sinner who rejects Christ, who refuses to confess his sin and pray, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner,” is like a person whose home is rat-infested and being progressively destroyed by them. So, let’s say you try to tell him. “Hey, you probably have rats gnawing away under your house. Better get in there and check it out and kill them and fix any damage they have already done.” And he replies, “oh, I don’t think so. It’s too much trouble.” And if we are honest with ourselves, this kind of self-examination, this searching out sin in our own selves and praying like this:

Psa 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: (24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

...that kind of praying is scary to us, isn’t it? The idea that God by His Spirit and His Word needs to do exploratory surgery on my heart to expose what is there....*what might He find to show us?*

When the Lord shines His Light upon us, dispelling the darkness which sin operates secretly in, it is blinding and even frightening. We saw it in Peter earlier:

“Lord, depart from me for I am a sinful man.”

And in Isaiah –

(5) And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Sin is like that lizard stuck to the shoulder of that guy C.S. Lewis wrote about in, was it, *The Great Divorce*? It doesn’t want to leave. It is a rat, sometimes a nest of rats, hiding to evade the light. But it must be exposed, rejected, and

killed.

Heb 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (13) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

I want to ask you, and I ask myself as well – *Do YOU really want the Lord to show you the rats of sin within you? I mean, do you REALLY want Him to search you out and see if there is a wicked way in you and then lead you out of it and kill it by His Spirit?* Most people don't. Even most professing Christians and you can see that resistance in things like this:

2Ti 4:1-4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of

season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (3) For the time is coming **when people will not endure sound teaching**, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, (4) and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Why won't they endure sound doctrine? Because they don't want the rats of sin exposed and rooted out of themselves.

If anyone chooses to permit the rats of sin to continue to work unmolested by the Spirit of God in their heart and mind, that utter sinfulness of sin will inevitably kill that soul, and such a person will most certainly depart this life one day and end in hell.

You go to the doctor for your physical ailments? Do you go to Christ for the healing of your soul? He is the Great Physician – the only remedy for this disease called sin. You have it, you were born with it. The moment you entered this world

you came with this fatal disease that is 100% fatal – *sin*. And unless you have been born again through faith in Christ, that fatal soul-killer rat still holds you in its clutches, gnawing away at your soul. Christ came that you might have life, that you might be set free from this black death plague that always takes the sinner to hell. Let's close with these words by Arthur Pink, commenting on Hebrews 4:12 and how that powerful Word lays bare the rat of sin operating in the sinner's heart:

The Word of God now exposes his innermost being. Having eyes to see, he [the sinner] discovers, for the first time, what a vile, depraved and hell-deserving creature he is. Though, in the mercy of God, he may have been preserved from much outward wickedness in his unregenerate days, and so passed among his fellows as an exemplary character, he now perceives that there dwells "no good thing" in him, that every thought and intent of his desperately wicked heart had, all his life, been contrary to the requirements and claims of a holy

God.

The Word has searched him out, and discovered him to himself. He sees himself a lost, ruined, undone sinner. This is always the first conscious effect of the new birth, for one who is still "dead in trespasses and sins" has no realization of his awful condition before God.

Before passing on let us earnestly press upon the reader what has just been before us, and ask, has the Word of God thus "pierced" you? Has it penetrated, as no word from man ever has, into your innermost being? Has it exposed the workings of your wicked heart? Has it detected to you the sink of iniquity which dwells within?

Make no mistake about it, dear friend, the thrice holy God of Scripture "requires truth in the inward parts" (Ps. 51:6). If the Word of God has searched you out, then you cried with Isaiah "Woe is me, for I am undone" (Heb. 6:5); with Job, "I abhor myself" (Heb. 42:6); with the publican, "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke

18:13). But if you are a stranger to these experiences, no matter what your profession or performances, no matter how highly you may think of yourself or Christians think of you, God says you are still dead in sin.

Pink, Arthur W.. An Exposition of Hebrews (Arthur Pink Collection Book 21) (pp. 306-307). Prisbrary Publishing. Kindle Edition.