

Stages of Sin

By Jeff Noblit

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Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Amen. Grab your Bibles and let's go to the book of James. I must be going to preach James in backward exposition because I'm going to a text in front of the text we did last time, but the flow and the context makes these so applicable one to another so as I was looking at this this week, I thought, "Yeah, I want to, I want to focus on this section of Scripture, it's a section of Scripture that ought to be oft repeated because it has such good, rich, practical instruction." Remember, James is the senior pastor of the Grace Life Church of Jerusalem. He's, um, a man of a lot of authority. As a matter of fact, when there was, a, a, contention among the Gentiles who were becoming believers and the Jewish believers thought, "Now wait a minute, how is this gonna work? Jews don't belong to God," and then finally they were convinced, "Well, God's saving them so they belong to God when they believe on Christ just like we belong to God when we believed on Christ," and so but how is this going to work? And so they met in Jerusalem at a local church and James sort of oversaw the meeting and they worked out how all this is going to work on the mission field with these, ah, what would formally be viewed by Jews as Gentile dogs were proven to be God's elect chosen people too. That was a radical thought for a Jewish mind. They thought, "We're the elect of God," and they were but as God progresses in revelation and we come to the New Testament, we find out God has his elect among all peoples, tongues, tribes and nations, not just among Israel.

Now James is the pastor there in Jerusalem but so many many many of his friends, um, I guess even fellow church members etc. have been scattered abroad. He says that early in the text, "To all the 12 tribes scattered abroad." It's a figure of speech saying, "To all my brothers and sisters who are gathered in little, ah, assemblies all over the world now because of the persecution." And so these believers are suffering. They're in tough spots. They're facing difficult trials and when you're suffering and you're depressed and you're discouraged, you are very tempted to sin, ah, lose your faith in God, start believing God is doing you bad or God's given you a bad deal in life, or in despair kind of throwing yourself into indulgences, maybe giving yourself over to jealousy of those who do not know God but they're doing better than you are, or maybe giving yourself over to the indulgence of, of, of alcohol or sexual indulgence. There's a lot of temptations that come into a person's life when they're facing persecution and difficulties and trials.

So he's writing to these people and he wants to make clear to them that from what he's heard, some of them are thinking wrong. They're thinking untrue. They're thinking

backwards or upside down, so he wants to straighten that out as he talks about the temptations, their lust and sinning. Look at, if you will, at James 1 beginning in verse 13, writing to these scattered groups of believers with this is a circular letter, he said,

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed [here's the phrase] by his own lust.

In other words, nothing outside of you is causing this problem with temptation, it's because something's wrong inside of you that causes this difficult situation to tempt you to sin. Verse 15,

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished [comes to full bloom or maturity], it brings forth death. [Then this summarizing statement,] 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

In other words, some of you are deceived, you're, you're looking wrongly at this, you're thinking backwards about this situation.

Now two false assumptions that I want to begin with. The first false assumption is that when we sin, it's the devil who is behind it. "The devil made me angry, or the devil's in me," and a, a, a, the new phrase, you know, back when I was younger it was, "The devil made me do it." They even had bumper stickers, "The devil made me do it." Now they've modified it a little bit and have you ever seen them on TV or, a, maybe on a news program or somebody talking about some movie star and they did something bad, "Well, his worst demons got a hold of him." Ah, at, at least there's a little bit of accountability there, they say they are their demons, but anyway, they are still putting most of the blame on a third party, somebody outside of them. Well, I guess naturally as fallen men and as fallen men we don't think about God and his glory, we think about ourselves and saving our own hide first, I guess we're all prone to shirk the responsibility for our own behavior. It's always convenient for us to blame others.

Have you, now, I've been alive 59 years, there hasn't been a time in life, in my lifetime when our culture was so bent on blame-shifting. We're all victims and all these people are doing us wrong and the real great evil ones are anyone whose skin is white and is of the male gender and is a descendant of Western Europeans. If your, fit that category, then you're the great, ah, ah, problem in the world and everybody else is a victim. We're, now according to James, that nonsense is wrong, that continual, quick, first place, of, of, of landing in your thinking that somebody else make me do this, the devil made me do it. You know, in Genesis, um, how did it unfold? Adam said to God, "Well, Eve told me to eat of this," and Eve said,, "Well, the snake." You know, we've got to blame somebody else and we're still doing that today. We're always prone to shift the blame. Now in Christ, something new begins to happen. When you come to faith in Jesus Christ, all of a sudden you begin to get honest about you. You begin to get in agreement with God.

Confessing our sin means to agree with God. So you begin to look at yourself the way God knows you to be. You begin agreeing with the truth that God says about you, that you are the problem and your heart is desperately wicked and by nature you're a child of wrath, and by nature you're a child of disobedience. That's just our first a, a, a place that we go, period. Christ enables us to begin to see the truth about ourselves.

Now again, this is the context, um, these difficult trials that these scattered believers are in and because of their fallen sin nature, they are facing some difficult things and they are prone to say, "Well, ah, somebody else caused me to get in this situation." But it's we ourselves who turn trials into temptations. A couple of examples here from Abraham's life. God told Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees, leave this region, leave all your people and go to the land that I'm going to lead you to. He didn't know where he was going, God said, "Just go. I'm gonna take care of where you're going, you just leave." Well, in my opinion, he compromised because who did he take with him? He took Lot with him and then what happened to Lot? Well, pretty soon Lot's herdsmen and herds were in conflict with Abraham's herdsmen and herds and there wasn't enough room, and so he said, "Lot, go where you need to go," and Lot picked the fertile valley of the Jordan, Sodom, and ended up losing about everything there. There's always a consequence. Always a consequence.

And then we have, um, a, Abraham facing the trial of having no son. God said he is going to be the father of a great nation can't even have his own son, so he listened to his wife and she said, "Well, have a son through my maidservant, Hagar, and that'll be the child of promise and that'll be the start of the great nation." So he compromised, he under the trial, the despair of no son, no heir, he compromised, he sinned and then what happened? Ishmael is born and there we have the whole Arab/Israeli conflict beginning and it has lasted to this day. Never been worse, actually. There's always a consequence.

Now God does not want us to yield to temptation but neither can God spare us the trials or difficult seasons or environments that we inevitably turn into temptations. We are not God's sheltered people though we are God's scattered people and that's true of these folks. They were scattered and they were enduring difficult days. Well, the devil made me do it was probably not the most common blame-shifting they were talking about, probably the most common one they were talking about from this context is, God made me do it. God is responsible for this. God put me in this bad place. God brought me into this trial. God at least is somewhat responsible for my bad choice. God is at least somewhat responsible for this sin I'm indulging in because God put me in this bad difficult place. That's why James simply says in verse 13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God.'"

Now in essence they were saying, "Well, God is testing me with this temptation," or they were saying, "Well, God's tempting me with this evil thing to see what I would do." But that's absolutely wrong. God is not the person who is tempting you. And he goes on to say in verse 13, "for God cannot be tempted by evil." It means he is untemptable, not untempted. God's not into that. God didn't play that game. There's nothing in God that can be allured by evil and nothing in God that can be enticed to evil, and if he was

tempting you to sin, then God himself would be involved in evil. He said that's contrary to the very nature of who God is. Nothing in God, not the slightest thing can desire evil, and he says in the text, "He Himself does not tempt anyone." He may try us but he does not seduce us. He tries you not to cause you to sin but to cause you to see your own weakness and how much you need him."

Now as we think about temptation, let's remind ourselves that temptation is often when we satisfy a good desire in a bad way. It's because of our own lust in our fallen hearts that we can take a good God-given desire and seek to satisfy it in a wrong way. A young person at school says, "I want to make good on my test." The temptation, "I may peek over at my neighbor's paper every now and then. I know they always make a good grade. Help me make a good grade." Good desire, make good on the test, temptation to cheat off of someone else. Good desire, "I'm hungry. I want to feed my family." Temptation, "I'll steal to get food for my family." And on and on and on we could go.

Well, as we look at this text, I want you to notice the steps on the downgrade, how we are tempted and I use that in a different context actually, but how we are drawn into these degrading steps down from lust to sin and sin's strongholds. Notice it, first of all, the first step down, we are in the first stage downward: the luring of lust. He says in verse 14, he says, "Actually your problem is that you are tempted and carried away and enticed by your own lust." The word "lust" here means "an inward craving or an inward desire that's outside of the will of God or without regard to the will of God." A lust or desire, an inward desire outside of God's will and it's in our hearts and it's in our mind and he says, "You're carried away by this." This is a, a, a picture from the hunting and fishing of the day. It, it's an illustration, and metaphor, if you will. You are carried away and enticed just like a fish would be drawn out of its hiding place by the bait that you place before it. Enticed would be the perfect picture of a baited hook. The bait is floating there in front of the fish, but unfortunately as he's drawn out of his retreat sensing the bait, he's enticed to take the bait, he's unaware that there's always a hidden hook. Child of God, sin always has within it a hook. Always. A hidden hook.

So our lust draws us to the bait and then our lust, notice not God, not the devil, you. Now look, Satan is alive, Satan works to trip you up, but Satan can do nothing that your fallen heart doesn't agree with and go along with. That's what he's saying. Now look, these are suffering persecuted people and certainly James has some sympathy for them but, listen, he knows this, "If I let you think that because of your difficult situation it's okay to sin a little, I don't love you as your pastor, I'm hating you. I'm hurting you because the wages of sin is death. So I want to keep you back from this temptation that you have that you're saying due to my difficult situation, I can indulge a little bit here." Our sinful hearts always lies to us about the consequence. Is it Proverbs 7 where Solomon's writing to his son and he's talking about the adulterous woman, the woman of the night, and he talks about how she goes out in the streets and she's alluring and she's looking for her prey? And by the way, if I could give a side commentary, it's wicked and evil and ought to be thoroughly punished for a man to abuse or harass or take advantage of a woman, but men aren't the only one with wicked hearts. It's wicked also for a woman to be alluring and be on the hunt and be seductive and take advantage of a man. Both are evil. Can I get an

amen this evening? Hate doesn't come in one color or in one gender. Evil doesn't come in one color or in one gender and wherever there's guilt, we stand against it, amen? Either way, either side.

But anyway, he's writing to the young man there in Proverbs and he says, "You know who she is. You know how she lurks in the street. You know how she goes after her prey." And here's what Solomon tells her, "Don't you go near her door." He didn't say go past her house and be strong, he says, "Don't go near her door." And by the way, you know where her door is. Now that's a figure of speech, it can be, it can, you can switch the genders around, "Don't go near his door or don't go near that door." The point is why are you going that way? Why are you drawn that way? God didn't do that, your fallen heart draws you to do that. That's what James is saying. The problem is inside of us. It's not God, it's us and we're always blinded that there is a hook. What does Proverbs say? That her ways, the ways of an adulterous is the ways of death. Death. We'll talk a lot about that in just a moment.

Remember King David, he looks off of his palace balcony and he sees a beautiful woman, Bathsheba, and the lust occurs in his heart and he, he goes and he goes beyond that, he doesn't fight at that level, and then he takes Bathsheba as his own as if she were his own wife, and then to cover his sin he has to have her husband murdered who was a valiant soldier defending the, the country and representing David on the battlefield. It was just sin upon sin upon sin. And then the Bible tells us that the baby born to Bathsheba is going to be taken because of the sin of David. There's always a hook.

Lot, Lot separated from Abraham. Lot didn't have to go into Sodom. He knew what Sodom was but how convenient, "My master, Abraham, has said I need to separate so I'll go down here to the fertile valley of the Jordan. By the way, there's a lot of fun down there." He knew what was in Sodom. Lot ends up escaping Sodom with his life, losing all of his family as he flees as God brings the judgment on that city. And by the way, the judgment of Sodom was primarily for the sin of homosexuality. There are some, ah, homosexuals now doing study Bibles, did you know that? And they say that the sin of Sodom was a lack of, um, what do they call it? Um, hospitality. Let's hope God didn't rain any fire down from heaven because you're not hospitable. No, that's not what the text teaches. I don't have time to go into all of that.

Well, let me say this: the normal desires of life are God-given and are good in and of themselves. We hunger but we need to hunger. If not, we would never eat or drink and we would perish. We grow tired, we grow weary, we need to rest and that's good because you get replenished in our rest. The sexual desire is God-given and given by God. It's normal. It continues the human race. But when we go outside of God's will for any of these or any other natural God-given desire, that's when we get into trouble. You see, eating is normal but gluttony is sin. Sexual expression in the bonds of a man and a woman in marriage is good and God-given, but outside of that it is sin. And young people, listen to your pastor, it always has been sin, it always will be sin because God doesn't change. Now your culture may change around you and come up with every perverse, bizarre thing to indulge in but you remember if God can change, then he's not

God. So his law can't change. Sleep is normal, it's God-given, but slothfulness can be sin. That's outside the will of God.

Now there are some who go too far, they go to the far extreme and they, they put on a, a holy spiritual attire and they really miss God in the, and they fall in the other ditch and that is they try to deny these things are natural and normal; they try to deny that they're not really there and they try to suppress them instead of biblically fulfilling them, and that in itself is sin, that is in itself is wrong because these desires that God has put in us is like the steam of the old steam powered machines of our past. You know, before we had diesel fuel and rocket fuel, all of our big machines were run by steam power. They'd put coal in a burner, the coal would, ah, heat the water and create steam and the pressure of the steam would drive the machine. Well, that's the way these desires are, they drive the machine but we, we, we need to have is the drives must be under control. God did not make us to be undisciplined beasts, we are people made in the image of God, therefore we can enjoy what God gives us but in the restraints and the controls that God has given us. If not, then these very desires become destructive.

Ah, my grandfather was a steam engineer and he actually worked on the TVA dams and he could run anything that was steam powered. I remember him talking about how dangerous it was because it was such enormous pressure and power in those steam engines, those steam locomotives, and if one of them got off in some way and exploded, it'd kill everybody around it. Well, that's what's happening in our culture as we give in and let these things run amuck among us.

So there is a lust in our fallen hearts to have pleasures and seek things outside the will of God and it's not the environment, it's not the trial, it's not the devil, it's not God, it's us; it's what's within us that causes that desire to be a temptation to go further. Well, he says not only is there the luring of lust, secondly in this downgrading, then you come to what I call the stronghold of sin. Notice in verse 15, "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin." Here we have the emotions and the mind were lured by lust to the stage where the will acts, and when the will acts on what was in the heart and mind, then it gives birth to sin. The, the, the temptation and the original lust wasn't necessarily sin but it's when the will agrees to it, it becomes sin. Now don't get me wrong, you certainly can, um, maintain thoughts and attitudes that can turn into sins within your heart, but there is a place where it was just a, a temptation and then you gave in in the will either to have it in your life, in your mind rather, in your heart, or in your behavior, and it gives birth to sin.

So now he changes the picture from the hunting or fishing world where he's talking about we're lured after a bait like a fish or a bird would be lured into a snare because there's some food there in it, now he brings us to the, the picture of childbirth. This lust has now conceived and it's birthed a baby, a baby of sin. What a hideous child this baby is. You see, sin is the union of lust and the will. When we give into lust and birth sin, it really doesn't look like any big deal, but notice how he words it here. He's not just talking about a sin, he said, "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin," now that may be just one sin there or one moment of sin, and then if you don't do something, if you don't fight there, if you don't repent there, "then when sin is accomplished," that's the stronghold,

that means brought to a maturity. You think it's no big deal but you wait until that sin runs its course.

Christian living is truly a matter of the will and not of feelings. The Bible says in Proverbs 5:22, "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, And he will be held with the cords of his sin." Held by them; when that sin continues on and it's not dealt with. First of all, you need to fight at the level of temptation and the level of being lured in your mind and in your heart. If you do sin, you've got to fight at the initial stages of that sin being committed. Don't let it go on to be accomplished. Don't let it continue to maturity. Deal with it. Fight in the early stages. As the old Puritan writer used to say, "If you're not killing sin, it's killing you." It's always true. It's always been true.

It's something like the, the little white grubs that we all have in our yards, you don't know they're there but they're there and they're eating and they're growing, they're actually eating the roots of that expensive grass you put down. And then the weeks go by and the months go by and it gets hot in June, it ticks into July, then you have all of these what they call Japanese beetles start bursting out everywhere and then they eat everything you've got in your shrub bed. That's sin being accomplished. It was just the grub, it didn't seem like any big deal, but wait until they all come into being, the insect, the beetle, it's hard to deal with them.

In Jeremiah 51:53, Babylon is called a stronghold. In Ezekiel 30:15, Egypt is called a stronghold. So because of our own fallen hearts, we're lured towards something and we're just, we're just very prone to saying, "It's not that big a deal." Go ahead and make the step with our will. Sin happens and if that pattern of sin continues without fighting, without repenting, then it is accomplished, it becomes a stronghold and after it becomes a stronghold, there's a third step in the downgrade, death. Death.

Look at it there in verse 15, "when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished," brought to its maturity, comes to its completion, "it brings forth death." Can I just give you a side note here? The only creature that can repent is a child of God. Did you know that? Unless you have received the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, you'll never repent to start with and the moment you receive Jesus as Lord and Savior because the Spirit has come into your life and changed you, then from that moment on you become a repentor, and like I said in a message a week or two ago, one of the surest ways you know you're a child of God is not because, a, a, you've just been forgiven of the penalty of sin, justification, you're not going to hell, which is true, but you're very concerned about the power of sin and you want to fight it in your life. To you it's hideous and to you it's a heartbreak and to you its grievous, even if it's the sin that so easily besets you and happens over and over again, you say, "God, I hate this in me." Fight it. Never quit. Never stop. Never give in. Why do you think the Apostle Paul went to the end of his life and said, "I have fought the good fight"? It's a fight but something changed in you when God saved you and it put in you the desire for righteousness and desire to unrelentingly fight lust and when lust has conceived to fight sin. Yes, you became jealous, you did it again, but repent, don't let it stay there. Yes, you became angry, you did it again, but repent, don't let it stay there. Don't let it stay there and make sure your

children see it, that you're fighting sin, because they face so many temptations and they think you're holier than thou because so many of you don't humble yourselves and let your children know that you are a sinner and need a Savior too. They need to know we're in the fight too, amen? Because they've got to enter the fight. That's why you come in here and listen to me yell at you twice a day on Sunday, because we all need the help to fight.

But what's, what's, what's the alternative? You gonna go to happy Jack, slap you on the back, fun church where you all leaved blessed and encouraged every Sunday because you're not hearing the truth of the word of God so that you can stay in your sin stronghold until it brings forth death. I love you too much. I love you too much to let you do that. You'd better come to where you can get the medicine you need. I'm telling you, there's gonna be a awesome day of accounting for these guys who get in pulpits and don't preach straight the word of God to God's people. This is health. This is healing. This, this is saving us. Yes, we're saved, justification, but it's saving us from wholesale giving over to the power and strongholds of sin.

It brings forth death, he says. When sin has run its course, it begins to produce death in our lives. Now from this perspective writing to Christians, I'm convinced he's, excuse me, not talking about eternal death, he's not talking about losing your salvation, that would be final and that is the final destination for everyone who does not know Jesus Christ, but here James talks about, I think, lots of different kinds of death. If you go on in sin, you can kill your marriage. You can be the husband who goes on in brazen sin and mistreats his wife and is unkind to his wife and doesn't hold her as precious and special and doesn't honor her, and you just keep beating down and beating down and beating down, and she may be there but as far as the marriage goes, you've killed it. Death has come. You may be the wife that doesn't honor the authority of your husband. You don't have a sweet and honorable and respectful and submissive spirit and you keep on and keep on, and you think, "Well, I'm getting by with it. He's still here." Yes, but he's closed himself off. You've killed the spirit of the marriage.

Sin when it's accomplished brings forth death. You can kill a marriage. You can kill a family that way. You can die in your marriage or family life. You can die financially. Proverbs 5:10 says his hard-earned goods go to the house of an alien. I remember a family friend when I was in high school, he was a man who had a successful and prominent business in my town but he loved alcohol and he loved women, and he kept indulging and indulging and indulging. I shared the Gospel with him several times very thoroughly. He never came to know Christ as Lord and Savior and the last time I checked, and this was many years ago, he was actually living with another family in the government housing in, in, in really the ghetto part of town. He had lost everything. He killed himself socially and financially with his sin. The wages of sin is death. Always has been. Always will be.

Moral death. The Bible talks in Romans 1:24 about those who God gives them over to the lust of the flesh. Proverbs 5:11 speaks of the flesh and the body are destroyed. People come to the point where they give in to all manner of, of lust and desires and, and, and we

keep adding letters to the alphabet, LGBTQ+. They need to put A and F on there for adultery and fornication. Let's get the heterosexuals in on it too. Let's all just give in to everything that comes across our minds and hearts, everything that might come across my fallen perverse heart. I'm supposed to indulge in it, glory in it, and you're supposed to confirm me and celebrate me. That's the spirit of the age that's just dying morally. You know why? They're in a bondage. They're saying they're free. Well, if you're free, quit. Stop it. They'll fight you to you, their death on that point. Why? Because they're in bondage. They're enslaved and they can't stop. They've died morally, given themselves over.

Mental death. Drugs and alcohol can destroy someone mentally. Proverbs 23 talks about the destruction and the misery of one who's controlled by alcohol. We've talked about it as a staff several times that we'll talk to some young man or some young woman and in, in talking to them, I'm talking about 20s, 30 year old folks, and as they talk, the dots don't connect. They're just, it's difficult to make conversation and they, they don't reason the way we reason, they don't, logical things aren't logical to them, and then we find out, I even had, a, a, a couple of guys tell me, "I, I did so many drugs when I was a young man and I, I'll be honest, I can't think clearly anymore." The wages of sin is death. They died mentally.

Then, of course, there's always premature death. In Acts 5, we see Ananias and Sapphira, God taking them out of the church and killing them physically. You know the old thing, I remember preachers getting in trouble because they said Elvis went to hell. "Elvis went to hell. Am I in trouble?" I don't know if Elvis went to hell or not. I hope that he didn't but, you know, the only hope that I have that Elvis didn't go to hell is that he died fairly young. You can give yourself over so long to where the Lord just takes you on home and gets you out of the way.

God can take his own. We see that in a, what is the text in Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 5 where he says this one that's having this immoral relationship with probably a step-mother, he said, "I'm delivering him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his soul may be saved." Sounds like a saved man to me, "his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "I'm taking him out of this earth even though he belongs to me." Dies physically.

Then, ah, ah, 1 Timothy 5:6 talks about the widow woman, the widow woman who gives herself over to pleasures of this world instead of serving God. If you're a widow woman, you're supposed to spend your energies in God's church. Now some aren't able physically, we understand that, but what energies God gives you, you're to be devoted to God's church. And then he says those who don't do that but run around town, busybodies and gossips getting into everything, he, but Paul said they're dead even while they live. Well, they're not dead physically, they're dead spiritually. They've lost their spiritual influence. Sin always brings death.

Verse 16 and we're wrapping up, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." Don' you think this is, don't you think you're gonna be exempt. See, here's what happens, it's the

saddest thing, when you give yourself to sin and you've stopped repenting and you've stopped fighting and you've started coddling, you've started excusing, you've started embracing sin instead of fighting it and repenting of it, then along with the stronghold that you can't get out of the very sin whether it's a heart thing or an action, along with that stronghold comes a dullness in your mind where you no longer sense the sinfulness of your sin, and so you're, there's, you are then the seed. You, you've, you've, you've bronzed, you've hardened your conscience. That's why he says don't be deceived. Don't go down that road. Verse 16, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." He says, "I love you and I know you're facing trial, I know this is difficult season, and it brings a myriad, a legion of temptations and struggles, but don't justify getting the sin because your life's hard. It'll destroy you."

One of the greatest ploys that Satan has is to convince men that sin brings life when it only brings death. Don't be deceived. Why do you think sin and rebellion is looked to make so glamorous today? Children rebelling against authority is applauded today. I understand in Canada now they've passed a law or the judge at least ruled that if a child, if a child in the home thinks they're transgendered, the parent cannot, ah, do anything to keep them from acting out that way and even taking injections of hormones. We applaud this, this sinful rebellion in children and on so many fronts today. Fornication is applauded, celebrated and embraced. Adultery is applauded and celebrated and embraced. Drinking alcoholic beverages applauded, celebrated and embraced. Drug abuse, let's legalize marijuana, applauded, celebrated, embraced.

But they don't want to tell you much about the hooks anymore. When was the last time you heard a statistic on the number of people killed by drunk drivers. I don't hear that much anymore. They don't tell you about the hooks anymore. They don't tell you about all the murders committed by people who are on drugs desperate to go break into somebody's home and kill them to get the money. They don't tell you about the robberies that occur. They don't tell you about all the assaults, the precious little children and babies that are abused by people who are given over to the strongholds of sin. I'm telling you, if you abuse a child sexually, you oughta be killed before sunrise. They've already started the movement, it's coming, pretty soon being a pedophile is gonna be, "You were born this way." It's already starting. I used to, look, I used to say things like that never dreaming the culture would embrace it. Now it's embraced. It's, we're becoming more perverse faster than I can grasp it, even think that they're actually thinking this way.

Aren't you glad we've got a church that's an oasis of sanity? I want a place to raise my babies that's strong and clear and a lot of good men and a lot of good ladies that are gonna be spiritual mommas and daddies and uncles and aunts and grandmas and granddaddies to them, to keep reinforcing God's loving truth but firm, ah, values in their hearts and lives. We need that, brothers and sisters. We need it. They don't tell you about all the battered wives from drunks and drug use and sexually immoral men. The thefts, the crimes, the emotional and physical scars on family members. Drunks lying in their own vomit. The billions of dollars our country loses in lost productivity every year because of sin. The billions of dollars spent in mental and, ah, ah, health facilities because the bottom line is men have given over to their lust and indulged in sins. Why

don't they show you the truth of what happens in the abortion clinic? Go ahead, put it out there. Come on, get it in the light of day. Let's see what's going on. No, they don't want to show you the hook. They don't, they don't want to show you the consequence of sin.

I hadn't said anything like this for in a long time but the, the, the Democratic party has absolutely lose their minds, that these Democrats are voting in laws literally to allow newborn babies to die out of some notion that it's a woman's reproductive rights. Kind of insanity. What kind of wickedness. Well these, look, these people have died morally. Do you understand that? And death never stands still. They die morally and then they find other people that can die. It just keeps multiplying.

James says, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren," don't, and I don't think a child of God can go down that road that far, either you'll repent or God'll take you out. I'm convinced of that, to the level where you would kill children and things of that nature. I don't think Christians can stumble and fall in a lot of areas. I, I do understand that. I know that but I just believe there's some limits God won't let a child of God go to.

We all, let's just get this ground level right here and every one of us are on this level ground at the foot of the cross, we all have a nature that's bent toward sin. That's why you need a Savior and that's why I need a Savior.

John Calvin said, "There is in all of us the root of our own destruction." Now see, that's why repentance is a gift. It's a gift. When you got saved, God put something in you that's troubled when you sin, that's troubled when you're lured by your own lust, that's troubled when you step over the line, and is troubled when you begin to coddle and embrace that thing you ought to...and, and the Spirit of God helps you and the preached word helps you and your quiet time helps you, and all of a sudden you say, "God, can't go down this way anymore. I've gotta change that attitude, that viewpoint. I've gotta get out of this pattern. Can't do it, God. God, I hate this." But here's what's different, not just because it's gonna ruin you and it is, but because it displeases and dishonors your Lord. That's what starts growing in your thinking. It's a God-centeredness, a Godward thought, not just about preserving myself.

But Satan will deceive us if we are not careful because the more we sin, the more we die. The more we sin, the more we're deceived and we think we're living but Satan knows we're dying. Satan cannot cause a child of God's eternal death so he works feverishly to kill everything else he can in our lives and I think the most tragic thing is Satan would love to kill your witness for Christ. He'd love to kill your witness for Christ. Nathan the prophet came into David after the sins he committed with Bathsheba and the sin he committed by taking Bathsheba's husband and killing him to cover his sin, and David repented. David was broken and God through the prophet said, "Well, David, that's good but the child will die." There was a consequence. There was a punishment. Then he said this, "Because of what you've done has given an occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme."

So I want you to join with your pastor on this Sunday night to rededicate our hearts to say, "Lord, save me from me. Yes, save me from the devil but that's not my primary problem. Yes, save me from the trials and the difficulties that are tempting, but that's not the primary problem. James said the problem's in here. That's the primary problem. God, save me from me." Then put God's reputation on the line. Are you listening? Put God's reputation on the line and say, "Lord, I want to live old, to old age and not dishonor Your name so help me not go too far and dishonor Your name." Now there's not any of us that can get up here and say, "Well, I, I'm not lured. I'm never lured by temptation." You can't say that. None of you can say, "I, I, well, I've never crossed the line from being tempted into sin." Yes, you have. You've even coddled and caressed and embraced some. God comes after you like them hounds of heaven on your trail and he yanks you back and you say, "O Lord, thank You. Thank You for saving me from me. I want to end my life not marring your testimony." Is that not your desire? That's my desire and I hope it's your desire. This is medicine is what this is. This is healing. This is help and I need it and you need it and all of God's children need it.