

# What Is Sin?

*Together in Truth*

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Preached on:** Saturday, April 25, 2020

**Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Tonight we are going to continue this series that we've loosely titled "Together in Truth" and we are gathering together in our minds and in our spirits around biblical truth even though we can't physically be together in the flesh just yet, and so we are doing a very important survey of systematic theology really, that is giving us the opportunity to collectively as a body at Truth Community Church, collectively as a body to catch our minds up with each other. Some of you have just come to our church in recent days before the virus outbreak and you've only been with us for a few months and some of you young couples with an infant or two, and you're just kind of coming in and catching up with us a little bit but there's a lot of teaching that has preceded you. Well, we want to take the opportunity to catch people like you up and we're glad to be able to do that. Others have been with us for a long time, for a number of years and yet these are truths that we need to always come back to.

The Apostle Peter said, "I want to stir you up by way of reminder," and I think it's important for us all and for those of us that maybe have been around Scripture or been around Truth Community Church for an extended period of time, there's a spiritual danger for us that we need to identify and take seriously. It is easy for us to start to take for granted the things that we've had in the past. It's easy for us to kind of let ourselves grow a little bit stale and to think that, "Well, we've heard these things and we don't need to hear them again." Nothing could be further from the truth. We need these truths coming through our minds again and again and again. Those of you that talk to my wife Nancy will find that she continually emphasizes the importance of hearing messages repeatedly so that they go in deeply into our minds and every time you listen to it it seems that there's something new or fresh that you missed the last time that you listened to it. Well, as a body that's true for all of us. It's true for us collectively. It's true for us individually. We're not as sharp as we sometimes in our pride we are prone to think that we are, we haven't arrived, we haven't gotten everything right and we need to humble ourselves and recognize that and even as we come to topics that we've covered in the past, you and I need to come before the Spirit of God and humbly say, "Lord, teach me. Open my mind. Illumine my understanding. Make me understand and grasp the significance of the things that I'm hearing so that I would respond to them properly, so that they would affect me personally and sanctify me, so they would be fresh on my mind when I'm able to minister the word of God either to another believer or to evangelize somebody else." And I have to tell you as a pastor, one of the things that I worry about in

air quotes, one of the things that I "worry about" is just the fact that of a concern about a creeping spiritual satisfaction that loses the sense of urgency of hearing what God's word has to say. That's lethal for a local church to fall into that and I'm urging you and asking God in my own heart to keep us from that, to keep me from that, to keep you from that, that we would ever be fresh and eager students of God's word. The Apostle Peter said that we are to be like newborn babes, longing for the fresh milk of the word.

Well, that's the spirit in which we approach these things. Yes, we've taught them in the past. Yes, we emphasized these themes repeatedly in the course of different messages, but we all need them and particularly a message like this, what is sin, is a topic and the scriptural teaching on this is something that will necessarily humble us, it will be convicting to us, and we need that. We need the word of God to convict us, to humble us so that we would confess our sins afresh, that we would have a greater fresher appreciation that we have such a wonderful Redeemer as Jesus our Lord, and those things all come from dealing earnestly with the teaching of Scripture as it answers the question what is sin.

Now before tonight in the past several messages that we've dealt with, we considered the authority of the Bible, we realize that the Bible reveals God to us, God in all of his perfections and his attributes, God in his Triune nature; we realize that there is a wicked invisible spirit named Satan who is a General over a host of other wicked spirits that are designed to bring us down, their goal is to frustrate us, to devour us, to sully our testimonies for Christ and to keep unbelievers from coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. Those are all serious themes. Last time we considered who man is, who you and I are as sharing in this humanity, and we saw that we are creatures, that we have a dignified position as those made in the image of God, but that that dignity has been compromised by sin and therefore we are mortal beings and we need to contemplate the source of our mortality. The Bible says that death entered through sin and that's what we need to consider here tonight.

Now just to kind of bring all of that together and tie it up in a bow as we launch into things tonight, the glory of God and the dignity of man and the high position that God has given us in creation should have an effect on us. It should, if everything were right in the world, it should cause us to worship God, to honor him and to thank him for the fact that he has done this for humanity and that he has given you and I life, that he sustains us in our lives and he provides for our needs, he continually gives us good things in order that we might enjoy our time on earth, just speaking in broad terms. The book of Acts talks about how he gives seasons to the earth and brings consistent harvest so that we're able to eat and enjoy good things, and all of these things should create in humanity, create in individuals like you a desire to worship God, a spontaneous returning of thanks to him for being the giver and the sustainer of our lives, but that's not the case. In fact, since Genesis 3 it has never been the case. Man should fear God and honor him in response to his goodness but, my friends, the history of mankind is exactly the opposite of giving thanks and worship to God.

If you just think in very broad terms about the broad sweep of biblical history, you'll find this to be true, that from Adam's rebellion in the garden of Eden through Israel's rebellion in the Old Testament, through the murder of Jesus Christ, through the persecution of his true disciples for the past 2,000 years, through the endless maze of false religions, and through the systematic exclusion of the name of God in modern society, you realize that the history of mankind is this: the human race has stubbornly defied its Creator and said, "We will not have this God reign over us," and that's true of us individually, especially before we came to Christ. We manifest remnants of that as believers when we sin against God and show indifference to him. Why this rebellion? Why this indifference to the God who made us and who sustains us and for us as Christians, redeemed us and gave new life to us? My friends, I want to tell you that collectively all of humanity, all of mankind is guilty of the greatest and highest cosmic crime imaginable. We must answer for this rebellion. We must explore the consequences of it but even more to understand the root of it, and to get to an understanding of why man is so ungrateful to his Creator and why it is that men so stubbornly refuse the Gospel of Jesus Christ when it is lovingly and earnestly offered to them. Why do men reject Christ? Why is it that they turn up their nose and turn their backs when someone comes to them and says, "You are a sinner in need of forgiveness and I proclaim to you the name of Jesus Christ who is the perfect atonement for sinners and who will lovingly receive you if you will only come to Him; that God has a disposition of love toward all sinners and earnestly desires their salvation, He earnestly desires your salvation if you will only come." And yet men mock that, ignore it, scoff at it, and in all of these things we are met with the acrid smell of sin, we are met with the awful specter and the awful spectacle of a created being rebelling against its Creator in ways that have to have eternal consequences if God does not intervene and save them.

Well, all of these things cause us to answer the question: what is sin? What is sin? And to just give you a working definition as we start here this evening, sin is any personal failure, sin is any personal failure to conform to God's law or moral character. There's more to the definition than that but I'll just kind of repeat that first half of it. Sin is any personal failure to conform to God's law or moral character and finds its roots in inexcusable ingratitude for God's goodness and love. Let me say that just one more time. Sin is any personal failure to conform to God's law or moral character and finds its root in inexcusable ingratitude for God's goodness and love. At root, sin is a fundamental disposition of rebellion and ingratitude toward the God who made us. That's at its root and then that manifests itself in attitudes, in words, in conduct that violate God's revealed law and that violate his own moral character. God is a God of truth and we are people of lies. God is a God of holiness and we are people whose eyes are filled with adultery if not our bodies and our iPhones and things of like consequence. God is a God of purity, a God of patience and we are people with short tempers and angry dispositions, Jesus expounds on all of those things in Matthew 5. And so what we need to see is this and we're speaking at a profound level here, is that our very dispositions are disposed against God and that is so inexcusable when God is so favorably disposed to us, when he has so lovingly made us, when he has so patiently sustained us, when he has sent Christ to redeem us, for mankind to raise its fist against God in rebellion, in refusal to hear his word, in refusal to worship him, in a refusal to fear him and love him, you must see that

there is this cosmic conflict between man and its Creator and there has to be, there has to be long-term eternal consequences to that, that God's order has been violated, that the character of God has been impugned and there must be consequences to that.

We'll talk about that in future messages but for tonight we simply want to get to the roots of the situation, we want to get to the root of where all of the springs from. You can think about tonight's message as peeling different layers of an onion, you pull off one layer and you see a different aspect of the onion and you keep peeling and getting more and more closer to the core. That's what we're going to be doing as we consider these four dimensions of the sin of man that lie ahead of us in our consideration of Scripture here this evening.

So we're going to start in Romans 1, Romans 1 if you would turn there and just see at this cornerstone beginning point of the Apostle Paul's systematic presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He said in Romans 1:16 and 17,

16 ... I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

Paul is saying, "I want to come to Rome and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and make known to you the righteousness of God. The good news of Jesus Christ, the good news that there is salvation for sinners, any sinner who would believe, there is salvation Jew and Gentile alike, everyone can find forgiveness of their sins in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Well, why is a message like that necessary? Paul goes on to explain and he starts his exposition of the Gospel with a vertically focused dimension that is expounding on the wrath of God. Why would God be angry at mankind? Why would mankind be under the threat of judgment from a holy God? Paul starts there and begins his exposition of the Gospel by expounding on the wrath of God and the reasons for the wrath of God. In verse 18 he says this,

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Paul says that in the revelation of God in nature there is enough for man to recognize that there is a God and that he is a God of power, a God of order, and there is a God that holds men accountable. There's enough just by seeing God revealed in nature to condemn man

for his lack of worship and Paul emphasizes that this sinful disposition that brings upon man the wrath of God is rooted in two aspects: they do not honor him and they do not give thanks to him. Man does not naturally render worship to the true God and man does not naturally give thanks to God, and this attitude of gratitude is something that is pervasive and central to a right response to God. In 1 Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul said in everything give thanks for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. The revealed will of God is that mankind would be thankful to him. The general revelation found in nature should compel men to see what God has done and to thank him and to give thanks for what he has done, and the reality is on the exact opposite end of the spectrum. Mankind does not do that. Mankind does not give thanks to God and what the revelation of God tells us is that that invokes the wrath of God against all of mankind so that we see Paul saying that his wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and against all unrighteousness of men, and the fact that as we saw in that initial reading that I did in Ephesians 2:1, that we were dead in our transgressions and sin, dominated by the devil, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, there is this universal recognition, there is this universal condemnation of man as being in sin, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Well, what I want you to see as we start to enter into this discussion of what is sin is that biblical revelation stretches its arms, as it were, across all of humanity and gathers us all up into one great courtroom. As we all sit in that courtroom of God, there is this universal condemnation that comes down from God that says, "Guilty. Guilty of not worshiping. Guilty of not giving thanks." And that vertical rebellion against God manifests itself in so many aspects of the character and the conduct of every man, woman and child that has ever lived. So this is of most profound consequence the things that we are considering here this evening.

Now what can we say about sin and how do we peel back those layers of the onion? How is it that we drill down to get to the core issues of it? Well, let's start with this first point and simply recognizing this, is that sin is manifested in your disobedient actions. Sin is manifested in your disobedient actions and you sin and I sin, you and I sin when we violate express prohibitions from God. When God says, "You shall not do this," and we do it anyway, we are guilty of violating his law. And I want you to turn to the book of Exodus 20 where the 10 Commandments are found for just a moment and we're just kind of, again we're just treating these things in such a survey fashion, we're just looking to give us a broad scaffolding upon which we can build other aspects of biblical thought as we have opportunity in the future. Exodus 20 is where the first iteration of the 10 Commandments are found and rather than looking at all of them, we're just going to focus on four to illustrate this point that sin is manifested in your disobedient actions.

If you look at Exodus 20:13 through 16, you see these commandments in the broader table of God.

13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

This universal moral law that is a manifestation of the character of God and a revelation of his will for men places boundaries upon the conduct of men. You shall not have any

manner of sexual activity except within the bounds of marriage between one man and one woman; everything else is sinful. Scripture goes on to say that you shall not murder. You shall not take away the life of another, another human being. Verse 15, you shall not steal, and it doesn't matter whether you're simply pilfering a bag of potato chips from your employer that you're not allowed to have, or whether you're stealing on a broader scale, anything by which you take something that does not belong to you and appropriate it to yourself, that is stealing, that is violating the 10 Commandments and that is sinful and that brings on the judgment of God. And in verse 16, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not tell lies. Well, you know, you combine all four of those things and realizing that we're only illustrating from a broader section of 10 Commandments, you start to realize that God's law is in one way or another condemning all of us here. Which one of us has never told a lie? Which one of us has always been completely truthful and said everything that was necessary to convey the truth, let alone not saying something that violated things as they really are? Which one of you is not guilty of a lie of some kind? Which one of you has never been angry? Jesus says that an angry spirit is the same as murder in the eyes of God. And on and on it could go. We start to realize that there is this somber weight that comes upon our souls when we realize that we have not kept the law of God in the way that we have lived and in our conduct.

Now some people will try to excuse themselves and say, "Well, I'm not that bad. I've never committed murder. I'm not, you know, it's not like I'm Hitler or somebody like that." And so they come up with this insipid standard that measures righteousness by the lowest possible human example that they could possibly consider and say, "I am more righteous than that person over here. I'm more righteous than that person in history. Or I'm more righteous than the drunk in the street. Or I'm more righteous than that executive that stole millions from his clients, or whatever it may be. I've never done anything like that and so therefore comparatively speaking I'm pretty well off." Well, my friends, if we're going to think about spiritual matters in that manner, we might as well close the Bible and end this time now because that is not a serious interaction with the law of God at all. It doesn't matter to you how other people have sinned, God is not going to judge you based on what Hitler did 80 years ago, God is going to judge you by what you have done and by your violations of his law in the course of the span of your life, and which one of us is free from all sin even by those standards? And what God's word says in the book of James is this, is that there is a certain unity to the law of God so that it can go on and says this in James 2:10, it says,

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

You see, there is this unified nature to God's law. Even if you had kept half of the commandments, which you haven't but that's another point for another day, even if you had kept half of them, the fact that you've broken the other five means that you are guilty of transgressing the law of God and so the fact that there is a comparative obedience in your life compared to what other humans have done, the fact that perhaps you've not

more egregiously violated some of the law of God compared to the things that you have violated, none of that excuses your guilt, none of that makes you righteous before God. If you are a violator of one single commandment one time of God, then you are a transgressor and you are under judgment and you deserve eternal condemnation for that. That is the teaching of Scripture. That is what the holiness of God requires.

You can think about it this way, I've heard it illustrated this way in the past, if you think about a beautiful pane glass window that exists in its integrity and perhaps has a crystal dimension to it that causes it to gleam in your eye and, you know, it's a very lovely piece of glasswork, well, you take one rock and throw it through that pane of glass and it shatters, the whole window is broken not simply the entry point by which the rock hit it, and so the whole thing shatters and cannot be fixed. Well, my friend, what you need to understand is that your sin is like that, one violation of God's law shatters the whole thing and brings condemnation down upon you in violating one of his prohibitions. You know, the reality of it is even if you're not conscious of it, is that you're guilty of breaking God's law they after day. If you just committed five sins a day and that may seem to be comparatively pretty good to somebody else, well, that starts to multiply and gather up. You're guilty of far more sin than this but five sins a day over the course of just for round numbers, 300 days out of the year would be 1,500 per year and you live 70 years, what is that? That's 105,000 sins. Just to make up numbers here, you start to see that your guilt billows out like clouds that are expanding in the course of a coming storm. You are not righteous. You are not free from condemnation. You are not innocent before the law of God. It condemns you. This is the significance of the fact that we sin when we do what God's law tells us not to do and there's a whole Bible that instructs us in the holiness and the character of God. So sin includes your disobedient acts.

Now that's bad enough, that's bad enough and that alone would be enough to condemn us eternally and to help us see just the magnitude of our guilt, but you go further and realize that God's law is not simply prohibitive in its nature, God does more than simply tell us don't do that, there are positive commands that Scripture tells us to keep, things that we are to actually do in an active proactive sense and you and I, we often forget that sin can be passive, it can be sin is manifested in the things that we neglect, the things that we do not do. You see, God not only prohibits conduct, he requires positive righteousness from us as well.

So just to pick one thing for an example, in Matthew 6:33 it says seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. There is a positive injunction placed upon us to be a people that are continually seeking God, to seek how to honor him, to seek how to know him, to seek how to manifest righteousness in our lives. You see, my friends, that requires active positive devotion to him and earnest seeking out of his word, and earnest devotion to prayer, and earnest desire in the heart to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And do you know what that means, is that even if you didn't violate anything that God said not to do, which one of you would claim that every waking moment of every day that you've lived, that you've lived life like that? That God has been preeminent in your affections? That you have carried a joyful thankful spirit toward him at every moment of your existence and never wavered from it even once? You and I aren't like that, are we? We start to feel the

crushing weight of our guilt before God. You see, even something as seemingly benign as spiritual indifference is sinful as well because the external aspects of life are under the command of God.

We can think about this aspect this way, think about it this way: many employees have written job descriptions which tell them what they are to do, it requires certain tasks for them to perform on the job and it probably includes things that they are not to do, but it's not enough for the employee simply to avoid the things that his job description tells him not to do, or the employee handbook says don't do this and that, don't harass your fellow employees and, you know, whatever else you're not supposed to do. But don't you see, you and I can understand that simply avoiding those prohibitions and not doing those things that are forbidden, that doesn't mean that the employee is doing his job, he has active things that he is supposed to be doing, he is supposed to be contributing to what his employer wants and what he was hired to actually do. Well, God doesn't hire us, he commands us to do things and to avoid things, and the failure to do either one of them is a manifestation of sin in our external lives.

And so we are not able to avoid this kind of condemnation, and so for you or for an unbeliever under the question, you know, what kind of person are you, they say, "Well, I think I'm pretty good. After all, I've never killed anyone. I've been faithful to my wife," or whatever. Friends, let's just be honest with each other, that is completely insipid thinking. That is totally superficial and a wrongheaded way think. That's not the question at all. The question is have you loved God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind? Have you loved your neighbor as yourself? Have you given yourself to God and have you given yourself to your neighbor unreservedly and lovingly and with a full, out of a full heart of gratitude, worship, fear and praise to God every moment of your day? You haven't? I have bad news for you. I've got really bad news for you. You've broken the law of God and the wrath of God is against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men.

So sin includes all disobedient acts toward God active and passive, and that alone is enough to convict us all before the throne of God. But there's more. Tonight I'm preaching a little bit like a surgeon, you could say. I don't know anything about medicine but let's pretend that I play one on TV as the ad goes, let's just think about the general aspect of what a surgeon does. The surgeon in order to heal the patient has to cut into the body and go deep enough into the body to get out all of the diseased tissue if he's going to do his job and bring healing to that patient. Well, when we consider the nature of sin and answer the question what is sin, we have to go down to the bottom of it, we have to get it all, we have to comprehend all that Scripture has to say about it and that leads us to our second point here which I'll state in just a moment, but here's the question for us: why is it that you and I sin? Why is it that we don't just naturally obey God? Why is it that you and I have times where we don't even want to obey God? And why is it that an unbeliever could hear these things presented to him and just kind of brush it off like so much dandruff on his shoulder and say, "Well, you know, I don't really care about that. That's not important to me." How is it that those things could be? Why do we disobey, that's the question, and that brings us to our second point here, is that sin is manifested in your disobedient attitudes. Your disobedient attitudes. You see, sin is more than simply what

you do or don't do, sin goes to your very thoughts, your attitudes and even your motives. God evaluates the inner man, who you are that no one else can see, who you are in your heart.

If you go back to Exodus 20, we can see that this has been present in the moral law of God from the very beginning. In Exodus 20:17, this is a very important point for you to see and so I want you to turn there with me. Exodus 20:17 says this in the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment, it says,

17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

You shall not covet. You shall not have sinful greedy desires in your heart. Friend, that is equally a part of the 10 Commandments as much as you shall not murder, bear false witness, steal or commit adultery. Coveting is a part of the prohibition that is found in the 10 Commandments and so we see that God evaluates the inner man and what he says is this, he says, "You shall not do these deeds and further you shall not even desire them in your heart." Sinful actions come from sinful attitudes and God prohibits the sinful desires just as much as he does the sinful actions, and so your wrong actions come from the fact that your heart is diseased and distorted by sin, that there is rebellion in your heart against God and the reason that you would rebel in the outer man against God is because there is rebellion in your heart against God. This is inescapable for the person who reads Scripture with any kind of an open mind.

Look at Mark 7, the Gospel of Mark 7 with me. Mark 7 as we turn to the words of Jesus here. We could have looked at Matthew 5 that talks about how anger is sinful like murder is, that lust in the heart is guilty of adultery, but we're going to look at Mark 7, a passage that we've turned to a few times but not as often as some other passages, but Jesus says in Mark 7:20, he says this,

20 ... "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.  
21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

It's like reading the 10 Commandments, isn't it? Look at it again, verse 21,

21 ... out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

You see, beloved, the reasons that you and I sin on the outside is because there is sin on the inside, there is sin in your inner man, there is sin in your inner disposition, in your heart, in that control center of your being which determines the things that you think and do. There are sinful inclinations there that produce the external sins that we were talking

about just a few moments ago and so we have to realize that when we see bad fruit on the outside, it is testifying to the fact that there is a bad root on the inside. You know, I had a pastor many many years ago who made this point that stuck with me a long time, when somebody is provoked and foul language comes out of their mouth or they respond in a really angry way to somebody who has irritated them, he had this saying that he said, he would say, "Your heart is showing. Your heart is showing." And in the angry reactions and in the angry words was a manifestation of the fact of something deeper that was going on in their inner man. Well, that's very convicting, isn't it, to recognize that those external actions are a manifestation of what is in our hearts. Do you know why you don't positively manifest gratitude to God on a consistent basis? Why you're not manifesting a praising spirit throughout the course as a pattern of your life? It's because your heart lacks that inside, otherwise it would come out, and the fact that ingratitude and complaining and grumbling come out instead is a manifestation of what's in your heart. Beloved, I understand that these things are hard to hear. It's convicting for me to say them. It's not like I've reached any level of high sanctification in my own life as I say these things to you, and I realize that I'm going to face a stricter judgment from God based on the things that I teach because teachers are held to a higher standard by God, James 3, and so I don't delight in telling you these things but you and I need to come to the reality and realize what we're really like and as we see sinful commissions and sinful omissions in our lives, we realize that we can trace them back to the reality of sinful things in our heart.

So one of the things that I'm always mindful of, maybe not always but one of the things that animates my perspective as a pastor in, you know, trying to look out for the spiritual needs of a flock is this, you know, I realize that things can look good on the outside when people gather together on Sunday mornings or interact privately with me, I have to be careful not to be fooled by that because things can look good on the outside but be very sick on the inside; and you know, I know that's true of some of you, you put up a good front but the reality of your spiritual life is very diseased, the reality of things in the privacy of your home or your marriage, oh, let's not even go there any further, shall we? But you know that I'm speaking the truth and God's word is speaking to your heart and convicting you and putting its finger on that very point of your life and saying, "Hey, Frank," I'm just using the word Frank at random here, don't have a real Frank in mind as I say that, saying, "Hey, Frank, what about this in your life? Hey, Susie, what about this in you?" Well, you see, as we're speaking brother to brother, brother to sister here, you and I have to be, we have to adopt a spirit of humility that says, "Yes, Lord, I accept the conviction that Your word brings. This is humbling to me but Your word, Your Spirit is right, I'm guilty on this score before You and I confess my sinfulness humbly before You."

So I can only ask you, asking you each individually, coming through the screen and coming to you and asking these things directly based on the authority of God's word, my friend, my brother, my sister in Christ, my friend who's not even claiming to be a Christian as you watch this, what's happening in your heart? Is there lust there? Is there deceit there? Is there ingratitude toward God there? Is there indifference toward God there? Is there a disdain and an indifference to his word? Do you even care about God's word? Do you even read it at all? Well, what's happening in your heart then to explain

that? You see, the reality of it all for all of us is that we're seeing the reality of sin as God's word comes to us and exposes us to it. And so, you know, I don't even mention matters of bitterness and grudges and things like that. I've said enough on these points for it to be clear.

Sin is manifested in your external actions both commission and omission, sin is manifested in your disobedient attitudes as well, but do you know what? We need to think even more deeply than that. There's another layer of the onion that we need to pull off if we're going to get to the core of it. You see, we need to ask this question: well, where do those sinful attitudes come from? Where do my bad attitudes come from? And it's at this very point, beloved, that you and I need to come hand in hand and cross the bridge into the reality and the fullness of what Scripture says about it, it's point 3 here this evening, is that sin pollutes your entire nature. Sin pollutes your entire nature and I just want to make a really blunt and direct statement and then explain it from the context of Scripture. You see, you're not a basically good person who sometimes has bad attitudes and bad actions. No, especially as a non-Christian, you are thoroughly corrupt. The reason that you have bad actions that flow from bad attitudes is because you have a bad heart; that your entire disposition is corrupt, is evil, is rebellious against God. That's where it comes from. What you're going to see in what we're about to share with you is that mankind, individual men are not basically good people who sometimes sin and have bad attitudes, no, their entire heart is sinful, is thoroughly corrupt so that there is nothing good in you apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. We always look for a refuge to try to salvage something of our pride in our own self-righteousness and so, "Well, I'm a pretty good person." What about omissions and commissions? "Well, okay, I'm not, I guess, no, I'm not perfect but I'm not that bad." Well, what about your heart and your bitterness and your lust and your deceits? "Well, yeah, sometimes but, you know, it's not like I'm all bad." That's not the teaching of Scripture. Scripture says the reason that you have bad attitudes is because your entire disposition has been corrupted by sin and rebellion against God and that leaves us with no place to hide. We're thoroughly ruined before God. We have no righteousness of our own to offer him whatsoever and that's the clear teaching of Scripture, is that sin contaminates every aspect of man's heart, mind and will. Let me say that again: sin contaminates every aspect of man's heart, mind and will.

In Romans 3:10 through 12 it says this, Romans 3:10 through 12, and I know you're familiar with this passage but I ask you please to turn there again and let your eyes fall upon the text as I read it to you in the course of this message. Paul at the end of verse 9 said,

9 ... we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;  
10 as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; 11 there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; 12 all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one."

Let's keep going, verse 13,

13 "Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving,"  
"The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of  
cursing and bitterness"; 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood, 16  
destruction and misery are in their paths, 17 and the path of peace they  
have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Paul quoting from different texts of the Old Testament there so that he goes on and he says in verse 19,

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are  
under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may  
become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh  
will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of  
sin.

Ephesians 2:1, you were dead in your trespasses and sins. It's not that there was a spark of righteousness or a spark of divinity in you. No, the natural man is completely dead in sin and that means this, it means that mankind cannot do anything to please God whatsoever because his heart is dead, it is thoroughly corrupt, there is nothing of life there to produce one good work truly pleasing to God in any of us apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we are all thoroughly corrupt and this is the doctrine of what theologians call total depravity. Total depravity, and what that doctrine means is this, is that unredeemed sinners have no spiritual merit before God whatsoever. There is nothing good about a sinner in the eyes of God whatsoever. They are utterly unable to do any spiritual good to please God or to change their condition. Sinners are utterly unable to do any spiritual good to change their condition or to earn the favor of God. That's what it means to be dead. It's not that they are partially dead, it's not that they are somehow in a coma that they can wake up from, it's not that they are thrashing about drowning. No, there's no life in them at all. They are dead, drowned at the bottom of the sea. There's nothing that they can do to save themselves, to improve their condition or to please God. The nature of man has been thoroughly corrupted by sin so much that there is nothing that mankind can do to improve his condition.

Now just to clarify what that means and the significance of it, the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that men are utterly incapable of doing comparative acts of kindness or comparative acts of goodness. Jesus spoke about how fathers knew how to give good gifts to their children in Matthew 7, you know, and there are on a human level acts of philanthropy, do some measure of human goodness and human help, the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that sinful men are as bad and corrupt as they possibly could be, but what it means is that sinful man cannot do anything to please God whatsoever. Guilt and corruption from Adam have permeated our entire being. Adam sinned in the garden and the guilt of that sin is attributed to all of us because he was acting as our representative. We inherited a corrupt nature from him and we live out the nature of that corrupt nature in our sinful lives, especially talking about as unbelievers.

So my friend, you were born with a corrupt disposition that turns you away from God at every point and inclines your heart toward evil. In Psalm 51:5 David said this, he said,

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

It's not that she was an adulterous or a fornicator, that's not what he's saying, but he's saying, "At the very point of my conception sin was transmitted to me and has tainted me from the very beginning of my human existence."

So that helps us understand the nature of things that we see in Romans 1. Why is it that man does not honor the God who is clearly revealed to him in nature? Why is it that he does not give thanks for God's faithful provision to him? It's because he is corrupted at the very core of who he is. The unsaved man rejects God and pursues sin because he loves it. Jesus said men refused to come to the darkness for fear that their evil deeds will be exposed. They prefer sin and darkness to light and salvation. Men are not saved in Christ because they don't want to be saved in Christ. A free offer of the Gospel comes to them, promises them eternal life, assures them that a willing God, a loving God will receive them if only they will come, and Jesus said, "You don't come because you're unwilling to come." You see, mankind, men stay lost not because of any unwillingness in God, mankind, individual sinners stay lost because it is the chosen disposition and inclination of their heart and is a manifestation of the fullest, blackest, darkest possible corruption that there could possibly be. They will pursue that course and continue in it even when you warn them that eternal judgment will be the outcome of it, that Jesus will send them to hell, and they'll brush it off, as I've said before, as only so much dandruff on their shoulder and go back to their dark wicked ways of life.

It is so profoundly sad, it is so profoundly contrary to the high position and the high dignity that God gave to mankind at the start in Genesis 1 and 2. Think about it, my friends, we're talking on the broadest most universal scale possible here. A good God, a holy God created mankind after his image and imparted life to him, and in Adam we fell and we inherited sin and corruption as a result of it. That fall of man from his communion with God and that position of innocence that he had into this state of deplorable corruption and rebellion against God is a colossal infinite fall that we can't begin to measure with a yardstick or with the outermost limits of our intellectual capacity. We're fallen and not even able to fully appreciate how much was lost in the garden of Eden and how much we carry the consequences of that in our souls. It's awful. This is no minor matter that we're talking about here. This goes to the very core of everything and to the very core of human existence. You want to know why there are riots in the streets and why inner cities are corrupted? It's not about economics, it's about the sinfulness of man. You know why executives can cheat their clients? It's about the corruption of man. Do you know why people have problems in their marriage and children rebel against their parents? It's about the sinfulness and corruption of man, all manifesting a common connection to that first sin of Adam and the rebellion against him which rejected God, said, "I will not have this God reign over me," and darkness replaced light. Man had a high position but he fell and now he is corrupt and he cannot change it in his own power.

You know, sometimes numbers are helpful here and we're going to get in numbers that I'm not even going to try to fully express for you. We've said five sins a day for 300 days, 1,500 a year, 30 years, 105,000 sins in a 30 year span and we know that we're underestimating when we say that, but going further to that and I'm not sure quite how my math is working out there because I'm having second thoughts and I don't have a calculator here to punch it all out here, 1,500 sins x 30, I guess that would be more like 45,000 sins, but whatever you get the idea, right? Let's continue this a little bit further. When you multiply an individual's sins, 70 years of life would take you to 105,000 under those numbers, when you multiply an individual's sin by 7 billion people in the world, and so you're getting into numbers that are of just colossal consequence and you see trillions and trillions of sins committed just on an annual basis over the course of a lifetime and you just multiply all of this by humanity, you see that this is astronomically incalculable. This is geometrically horrific, the weight of guilt of sin just in individual sins that we could be held accountable for to say nothing about the corruption of nature that generates it all in the first place. What we see is that we live in a world that is hopelessly corrupt, hopelessly sinful, and I hope that you get something of the measure of how a holy God could be wrathful toward his creation in light of that, why judgment must come, why this disorder in the created nature of things cannot last forever. There must be an accounting. These things must be set right. They must. The character of God requires it. The honor of God requires it and the honor and the glory of God is the most important thing in the universe and it must be vindicated. But when you see that 7 billion-fold manifestation of sin, don't be surprised at what you see in the world, beloved. The worst of things that we see are to be expected when darkness prevails in the human heart like it does.

Well, point 4 is that sin has profound consequences. Sin has profound consequences and I'm just going to mention four things and I'm going to mention them very quickly without expanding on them at all, but the nature of sin has at least four consequences, the four that we'll mention tonight.

First of all, one of the consequences of sin is spiritual slavery. Spiritual slavery. Jesus said in John 8:34,

34 ... everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

John 8:34, "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." Do you know why you have such a difficult time breaking your sinful habits? It's because you don't own the habit, the habit owns you. That's what Jesus says, you're a slave of those sinful things; unless the Holy Spirit intervenes to help you, you are a slave to those things that you are doing. It's the reason that you can't stop, it's because you are a slave to sin, you're in spiritual bondage. That's one consequence of sin.

Secondly as we talk about sin, it results in separation from God. Separation from God. Isaiah 59:2 says this and this is a verse that's worth you memorizing if you're not familiar with it. Isaiah 59:2,

2 ... your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,  
And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

Isaiah 59:2. Your sins have separated you from God. His face is hidden from you as a result of your sin and this is the consequence of our rebellion is that now for those of you that are not in Christ, you cannot find God on your own because God has hidden his face from you, and what an awful position. You're a slave to sin, you can't get out from under it on your own, it thoroughly permeates your being and the nature of sin is such that God has hidden his face from you. Psalms speak about God being indignant with the unrighteous every day.

Thirdly, and going along with that point that I just made, another consequence of sin is the wrath of God. The wrath of God, the anger, the judgment of God against sinners. John 3:36 says this,

36 ... he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of  
God abides on him.

There is this continuing ongoing nature of the wrath of God on the life of a sinner. There is an active hostility that is taking place under sin, under the wrath of God, and that's not the worst of it, the worst of it is that there is an eternal consequence to it that is unavoidable. As we all take a fast track to our appointment with God and our day of judgment before him, Scripture says in Revelation 21:8 and it really takes my breath away in this moment to even read this and to contemplate it as I share these things with you. These are not trivial matters. This is about the nature of existence, the nature of who you are apart from Christ and what awaits all of mankind. These are things of global universal significance and it paints a very dark picture of the nature of mankind. Revelation 21:8, what's the outcome of all of this sin? What's the outcome of spiritual slavery and separation from God and the current wrath of God that's revealed against men? What's the eternal outcome of this? Revelation 21:8,

8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers  
and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part  
will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second  
death.

You'll die physically if you do not know Christ, that's one death and that's bad enough, but there's a second death after that, an eternal death of judgment under God by which the eternal consequences are suffered for those sinners who have broken the eternal law of an eternal God. An eternal God gave an eternal law, the violation of which requires eternal punishment.

My friend, could that be you? Could that be you in such a condition as that? Don't lightly dismiss the question. Don't lightly say, "Oh, but I'm a churchgoing person, you know, I attend Truth Community Church." Well, you know, not everybody that attends Truth

Community Church is going to heaven, Matthew 7:21 to 23 if you want to look that up. So could this be you of which we're speaking? Could it be that your indifference to God that you have tolerated and excused, made excuses for for such a long period of time is actually rather than being a reflection of somebody who's just a backslidden Christian, maybe we ought to consider the fact that you've never been saved in the first place and that's why your life manifests such a continual indifference to God and a continual state of different sorts of rebellion against him. How else can we explain that? How else can you explain that? Would you really just brush that off in light of the fact that there is a second death for sinners like that? You can see why the Apostle Paul gives an urgent warning in 2 Corinthians 13:5 that says, "Examine yourselves to see if you're in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail the test?" There is good news. There is good news in that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners just like you, to save sinners just like me; that Christ has not left us and abandoned us to our own rebellion but, beloved, we shouldn't just so quickly gloss into that which we know about the Gospel after hearing these things from Scripture. We need to deal with them earnestly and consider carefully what Scripture says and what the consequences of them are for us.

I want to offer all of the hope in Christ to every sinner who would believe and I gladly and freely do that and I thank God that I get to do that as often as I do from this pulpit, and that same Gospel I offer to you even tonight in what we're saying, but at the same time I don't want to offer you any false hope. Those of you who have no desire for holiness in your life, those of you who are indifferent to Christ, those of you who casually come and go from the people of God, and those of you that have no real desire for prayer, no real desire for God's word, my friend, that does not make sense for someone who claims to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, of someone who's truly repented and received Christ for their salvation. That kind of cold indifference to God makes no sense whatsoever. For some of you, the fact that you live a double life and you think that you're hiding it but you're really not, if before nothing else God sees it and you comfortably live a double life, my friend, there is no hope in the Gospel for you if you persist in that. Scripture warns us that without sanctification no one will see the Lord. How can you think that you're destined to live eternally with a holy God if you have no desire for holiness here on earth? Hard questions, aren't they? That's what the doctrine of sin provokes in us to examine ourselves and to consider these things.

Well, my friend, there is hope that I want to offer to you but we're going to stop here for tonight. Tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock on Sunday morning, we'll be answering the question what is salvation and it won't hurt any of us to deal earnestly with the things that we've heard tonight and to sleep on them, to let them create in us a desire to come back to God's word tomorrow to hear good news with a sense of urgency and with a sense of desire, "I need to know what that salvation is. I need to know where the path of deliverance is that would save me from these things that I've heard today." My friend, I hope you'll be back with us tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Let's pray together.

*O God, Your word says with good reason that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. My Father, I pray that You would give wisdom to everyone that has heard these words or will hear them in the future, give wisdom to perceive the depth and the seriousness of these things and the fact that we're not talking about people out there, we're not talking about someone else, we're talking about each one that hears, each one that lives, Lord, and has ever lived and ever will live, all of these things apply to every man, woman and child. Father, forgive us of our sins and bring us back tomorrow so that we could hear the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ as we answer the question what is salvation. The answer to that question is the only solution to the dilemma that we have seen tonight in what sin is. Be gracious to us, Almighty God, as we humble ourselves before You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at [thetruthpulpit.com](http://thetruthpulpit.com). This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.