

Rooted: Sin

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, October 22nd. My name is Kent Dixon. It is my joy to be the pastor here. And welcome to each of you this morning.

I say this all the time. Welcome to you in person as I look back at your shining eyes and your bright smiles, mostly. It's cold. We know it's cold.

And welcome to everyone who is tuning in later. Lots of people will listen to the sermons online, will listen on the phone line, and tune in in different ways, our podcast and other things.

So welcome to people, however they're tuning in. This morning we're continuing in our sermon series, Rooted. And over the past several weeks in this series, we've been considering many things that form the foundation of our faith.

Things that we need to remember and understand clearly to remain rooted firmly in Christianity.

And every sermon in this series is available on the website. So as I've said before, they are standalone sermons, but they do work together as an overall series.

[1 : 06] So they're all available on the website and other channels, always available there. And they're searchable too. So someone asked me this morning, I remember a sermon you preached about something, and can I find it?

Yes. Go to the sermons section of the website, and it is all searchable there. So every sermon is there, and you can search them by topic or theme or series or whatever, or speaker even. So we've been considering lots of these concepts, these themes and topics, and one of them in particular can be kind of uncomfortable for people to discuss.

And it's important for us to recognize that up front this morning. I also said to someone this morning, haven't seen you in a few weeks, and you picked a great Sunday to come, or not.

But I believe one of the topics that's hard for us to hear that we're going to be exploring this morning is sin. So why is it uncomfortable for people?

Well, I believe there's a variety of reasons. I think the primary reason for that discomfort is that as human beings, maybe you can relate, I know I can, we do not like to be wrong.

[2 : 22] We don't like to feel like we've done something bad, or we've hurt someone, or we've done something that's counter to what social norms would be, but also to what God's will would be for us.

So let me pause for a second. And why am I qualified to be up here preaching to you on this topic? Because I'm a sinner. I'm a subject matter expert because I do it myself.

So I'm not up here this morning to say, I'm better than you, I'm the pastor, I'm elevated literally on the stage, none of that. I'm here speaking to you as a fellow sinner.

So if someone is a Christian, though, we recognize that that sense of guilt, that sense of feeling like we've done something wrong, is actually more correctly known as conviction.

Does that make sense? It's the Holy Spirit at work in you to identify sinful behavior in your life. So I think we need to identify a couple of incorrect perspectives about sin that you may have experienced or observed yourself.

[3 : 38] Christians may believe, may come to believe, that thanks to Jesus, they no longer have a sin issue in their life. Eek. For people who don't recognize the authority of the Bible or God in their lives at all, they may think of the idea of sin as being positive indulgence or unrestrained freedom.

The kinds of things that we, that a follower of Jesus might recognize as sinful, someone who doesn't recognize Jesus as, as their Lord in their life, may recognize as, hey, I can do whatever I want.

This is good for me. For other people, some who follow Jesus, some who don't, maybe the idea of sin feels like an archaic concept.

They just can't wrap their heads around. If you read the newsletter, you know, every week we do the little blurb. I write a little blurb teaser for the sermon that week.

And this week I said, sin is one of those topics that pastors tend to steer away from. And why is that? Well, lots of churches are about making you feel good.

[4 : 52] So I don't want to make you feel guilty. I don't want to make you feel uncomfortable. So I'm just going to steer away from a critical concept for Christians. And that's sin.

I'm not here to entertain us. I'm not here to make us feel comfy and cozy and unconvicted. Not at all. So we're going to spend some time on this topic of sin this morning.

And let's start by looking at, great place to start, Isaiah 59 verses 1 to 8. So it's a little bit of a long passage. You can follow along or listen, but I believe it's an excellent primer to remind us of what sin is all about.

Now hear this. Isaiah 59 verses 1 to 8. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, or his ear dull that it cannot hear.

But 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. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity.

[5 : 59] Your lips have spoken lies. Your tongue mutters wickedness. No one enters suit justly. No one goes to law honestly. They rely on empty pleas.

They speak lies. They conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity. They hatch adder's eggs. They weave the spider's web. He who eats their eggs dies, and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched.

Their webs will not serve as clothing. Men will not cover themselves with what they make. Their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands.

Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity. Desolation and destruction are in their highways.

The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths. They have made their roads crooked. No one who treads on them knows peace.

[7 : 07] Isaiah 59, 1 to 8. Murder, filth, lies, corruption, injustice, dishonesty, evil deeds, violence, destruction, no peace.

We hear all of those things in this passage. And all of these concepts describe sin in one way or another. That passage certainly sounds contrary to what we have come to recognize over time as the characteristics of God, doesn't it?

The model that Jesus gave us during his earthly ministry does not fit the description that we read there in Isaiah. And maybe you're thinking, you know, you've just heard me read that, read that incredibly uncomfortable passage.

Well, I don't do anything like that, of course. Certainly nothing that bad. Right? Is that the way you're maybe looking at it? Well, definitions, I believe, are always a good place to start.

You know that about me. So what is sin? How do we define it? Well, there's one definition that I found, and I think I've used this definition in the past. Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.

[8 : 28] You can see it there. Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature. So let's be reminded here that God is the creator.

He's the creator of everything. Not simply the universe and people and animals and everything we see around us in the natural world. But God, I believe, hopefully you believe this as well, created morality.

Morality is not a human invention. No matter what you hear, what you're told, God is eternally good. So there's nothing about God that is not good or right or correct.

And since God is the creator and he is always good, he gave us his law to help us stay on that path. It's God's law that shows us the proper way to live as created people.

And it shows us how to live properly in relation to other aspects of creation. So it's when we fail to live according to God's law that we sin.

[9 : 39] And we've recognized this before, that God hates sin, right? We all know that. Because it goes against everything that he is. So how do we sin?

As I was writing this, I was thinking to myself, this is not a how-to guide I'm about to give you.

Sounds like it, though. How do we sin? Let me give you some suggestions. This is not to teach you

how to do it, but how to recognize the ways in which it tends to happen.

Is that helpful? First of all, as this definition says, we can sin in our actions. And as we read in Exodus 20, verse 13 to 16, for example, you know where this passage is going to go.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. So these are clearly actions.

Murder, adultery, stealing, lying, deceiving other people. We all do those things. Maybe not all of them on that list. But those things are sin.

[10:48] Hopefully we can recognize that. We can also sin in our attitudes. And this is a trickier one. We read in Exodus 20, verse 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 is your neighbor's. So there's no action there.

There is attitude there. Coveting is wanting something that belongs to someone else. It's a desire within our hearts to want something that doesn't belong to us.

Quite often we like to watch renovation shows. And I watch renovation shows and I look at these beautiful homes and I think to myself, I've wasted my life.

I must have wasted my life because I don't have a home like that. I don't have a car like that. I don't have this kind of savings plan set aside. I'm not ready for my retirement.

[11:51] Thank the Lord I am a ways off from that. But that's the reality, right? As we begin to see what we don't have and we want it so badly, sin. It's coveting.

Because it takes what should be in our heart, a healthy perspective in our heart, and replaces it with a sinful, desirous attitude.

Third, we sin because it's our nature, which maybe makes you feel a bit hopeless. But Paul addresses this in Ephesians 2, verse 3, when he says, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

As I said, I'm qualified to talk to you about this topic because I'm unfortunately good at it too. We're inclined to do, we feel drawn to do what is against God.

That's just our nature. So where does this inclination come from? Let's begin with something I hope is obvious. Our inclination to sin does not come from God.

[13:16] Hopefully we can agree on that. God did not create us to be sinful. Deuteronomy 32, verse 4 says, The rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.

A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. James 1, verse 13 says, Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. Sin is a complete contradiction to the nature of God.

He is incapable of sin himself, and he cannot be blamed for it. Do you hear that? So if God is good, if our God is good, we've recognized, and he doesn't cause sin, then why does he let it happen?

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever thought that way? Ephesians 1, verse 11 says, In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

[14:39] So it's a mystery, and you've heard me say before, that often feels like a cop-out for us to say that, but it's true. Not all the things of God are known to us.

God decided from the very beginning that he would allow his creatures to willfully and voluntarily sin. It's important to recognize that.

That is an unfortunate byproduct of our free will. Can you recognize that? God gave us free will. He allows us to make choices, and our sin nature often causes us to make the worst possible choices.

So we can't fully understand this, but God is good. That's his nature. And he hates sin.

But in allowing free will, in allowing our free will, he allows sin to happen. So we recognize that sin entered the world when God gave Adam and Eve free will.

[15:47] He gave them the opportunity to choose. He gave humanity the opportunity to choose him or not choose him. To obey or not obey.

And we know what happened from there. Because of Adam and Eve, all humans inherit that sinful nature. That's just reality.

Romans 7 verse 18 says, For I know that nothing good dwells in me. That is, in my flesh, Paul says.

For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. There's that tension, right? The desire, the recognition of what good is, what God is calling us to do.

But our sin nature often pulls us to make the wrong choice. Jeremiah 17 verse 9 says, The heart is deceitful above all things.

[16:53] And desperately sick, Jeremiah says. Who can understand it? That's tough to hear, right? Psalm 51 verse 5 says, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity.

And in sin did my mother conceive me. It's hardwired into who we are. Sin was brought into the world through free will and a poor human decision.

And now we're all inherently sinful. Do you feel nice and guilty now? Romans 5 verse 12 says, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.

It's sounding more hopeless, isn't it? So that now that we've defined sin, we've recognized ways in which we may sin and explored the origin of it, where it came from, we need to recognize that sin affects everything about us.

Sin affects our ability to be objective and reasonable. Sin affects our emotions, our desires, our heart.

[18:16] Sin affects our goals and our motives. Sin can even involve our bodies, and scripture makes that clear as well. So one perspective I may, I believe we may try to adopt is that, well, we're not as bad as we could be.

Right? Well, I could be worse. I'm not that bad. Or perhaps even worse. Now hear this one. Well, at least I'm not as bad as that guy.

Have you ever heard that? Have you ever thought that? Well, I'm bad, but yikes. That's dangerous. Because remember that we can never be good enough to please God or to make up for, atone for, pay for the price of our sin.

Never. Not on our own. Isaiah 64, verse 6 says, we have all become like one who is unclean. And all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment, this translation says. And if you know various translations, polluted garment can be defined in very different ways that get very awkward.

[19:34] But we all fade like a leaf, Isaiah says, and our iniquities like the wind take us away. To me, sin is one of the great equalizers for humanity.

No matter your race, your political stance, your social status, your retirement portfolio, sin calls all of us, causes all of us to stand guilty before God.

Level playing field of sin. Psalm 14, verse 3 says, they have all turned aside. Together, they have become corrupt.

There is none who does good, not even one. Romans 3, 23 says, and you know this one, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

1 John 1, 8 says, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

[20:46] And we've talked about this in the past. What we truly deserve for our sin, the penalty for our sin, is death.

That's it. Romans 6, 23 says, makes it clear, for the wages of sin, the cost of sin, the price of sin, is death.

But, you love a good but in Scripture, but, the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. So question, I'm a logic guy, if the payment for sin is death, Scripture's clear, why don't we die the first time we sin?

We're all a bunch of sinners, why are we even here? 2 Peter 3, verse 9 says, the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness.

I like that. God's slowness and human slowness, not the same. God is, it says, is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

[22:06] Isn't that beautiful? God's patience applied to our repentance and redemption. Friends, our God is not a God of punishment.

He is a God of grace and a God of love. He wants to give us a chance. Can you see that in your own life?

Can you see that in Scripture? He wants to give us a chance to recognize our sin, to repent of it, to receive forgiveness and salvation.

That is what God is about. He's about restoration. salvation. So what effect does sin have on Christians? Well, it's a fair question.

Does it really have that much effect on us at all? Really? If we're redeemed, if we've been forgiven, if we can have forgiveness, if God is an eternal, forgiving, loving God, if we've accepted Jesus as Lord and been saved from our sin, aren't we good?

[23 : 10] And, sadly, no. Sin doesn't change our status or standing with God. Not at all. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 3 says, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

1 John 3, verse 2 says, Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

So even though as Christians we continue to sin, we're still forgiven. Jesus died to save us from our sins in the past, in the present, and praise God in the future.

And when we confess our sins, God's forgiveness to us is secure. So our sin can still affect our relationship with God because when we sin we break his heart.

We grieve him. And our sin may at times require discipline. And whatever form that takes, whatever form God may work that in our lives.

[24 : 37] It may come. Hebrews 12, verse 6 says, For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.

Hebrews again, 12, verse 10 says, For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them. But he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.

forgiveness. We also need to recognize that sin can affect our relationships with others and that's hopefully not a shock and you can probably recognize it in your life.

I'm sure we can all recognize times when we've made a choice. Free will again. Something that we've said or done has affected someone else in a negative or unhealthy way.

We probably don't even have to think very long. I know I don't. To recognize that a sinful attitude or motivation probably lies behind those bad choices.

[25 : 40] Sin begets sin generally. And we're all at risk. You've heard wash, rinse, repeat for washing your hair. We're all at risk for the terrible and dangerous cycle of sin, confess, repeat.

Do you ever recognize that? Oh, I shouldn't have done that. Sorry, Lord. Continue to do it. Not how it's supposed to work. We must not get on that path that is just leading us towards complacency. Leading us towards greater and greater sin in our lives. We're supposed to seek to become more like Jesus. Remember, we've talked many times in the past about repentance means to do differently after.

It doesn't mean, sorry, Lord, and I'm going to do it again, and I'm still sorry, by the way. It means, sorry, Lord, rats, I need to try and correct that behavior, give me the strength to do it.

1 John 3 verse 9 says, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

[26 : 57] So that's not to say that we're unable to keep on sinning, that we should beat ourselves up for doing it, but it does say that we must, with God's help, resist giving into the temptation of continual sin.

It's important. So another thing, this is something I want to leave you with, is that when we're aware of sin in our lives, we need to deal with it quickly.

1 John 1, 9 says, if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God has made a way for us to be freed from that burden of sin in our lives. But it is on us to choose that path, to confess our sins, to seek God's help in repenting of sinful choices, and to help us to do differently after.

So that's what I love about sin. Now bear with me on that statement. Sin is not a vague concept. Can you recognize that?

[28 : 17] It's not something that's arbitrary, that's really no big deal. sinful, we can recognize the ways that we may tend to sin, and just like each of us is unique, our ways of being sinful are probably equally as unique.

But we can always return to God. We can always seek forgiveness. We can always be sure that we will receive that forgiveness.

And we can have his strength in our lives through the Holy Spirit in us to do differently after, to be more Christ-like as we continue on this journey of life.

Thanks be to God that his grace and his forgiveness are not a one-time limited offer. God's grace and forgiveness is an endless, limitless ocean that is always available to restore our relationship with him, to cleanse and refresh our spirits.
Thanks be to God again for his amazing grace, for his boundless love, and his eternal forgiveness that saved a wretch like me.
[29 : 39] Amen.