

We Have Sinned

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[0 : 00] Welcome all, it's good to see you. Welcome those who are listening on the podcast this morning and we'll be listening during the week. We've come to the point in our four-point gospel of where last week we'd looked at the cross, we'd looked at the love of God first there. This week we're looking at the X which is about sin. There was a vicar got up and thought he would actually teach the church about the sin of lying. So he said I just want you to go away this week and read Mark 17 and come back which would be really good. And so the next week they all came back and he said I'd just like you to put your hands up for all those of you who've been reading Mark 17. Of course everybody put their hand up. He said I think we need to preach on this. There's only 16 chapters in Mark's gospel.

This week I've been thinking about this thing about sin and how we want to deal with that, how we want to talk about that, how we want to acknowledge that, how we want to overcome that. And this week, I don't know about you, I'm being very judicious in washing my hands for 20 seconds. Now I've been told by the press that it's a good idea to do this while you're singing happy birthday.

Happy birthday to you. Well I don't know, I got a bit fed up with that really to be honest. You know, while you're stood there and you know wherever you wash your hands in a public place, you know, people do look at you a little bit strangely as you're singing happy birthday to yourself as you go along. So I thought we could use this as an evangelistic opportunity people.

And so I thought we'd come up with this this morning and I want to give thanks really to, let's have a look, where is it? It is actually the first Baptist church in Glen Arden which has had 7 million hits. So here's something that may help you as you're stood there wherever you wash your hands this week to remind you of our scripture.

[2 : 15] So we're going to start off really, oh happy day. So we're going to get really in here. When Jesus washed, you can swear along people.

Yes. You can get into the groove. Yes. Amen.

Yeah. Oh yes, got to get the fingertips. Really get in there. Jesus did wash my sins away. Fantastic. Well done. Amen.

Amen. Jesus did wash our sins away. And I think for Christians sometimes we really struggle to engage with that message that we need to get to people, the seriousness of actually this essence of what this sin is that pollutes our lives.

We've got our cards that we've all been given which is to go with the wristband. If you haven't got one, please take one. And the four points of the gospel, it says this morning, sadly we have been separated from God's love by something the Bible calls sin.

[3 : 37] Simply put, sin is when we choose to live for ourselves rather than for God. We sin when we ignore God, break his laws and basically do things our own way.

Sin destroys relationships with friends, family, with God. And the Bible says that sin ultimately brings death. It's a serious issue, friends.

Sin destroys relationships with friends.

Friends, colleagues, families, and friends. And a reading from Isaiah, it says, They pursue evil schemes. Acts of violence mark their way.

The way of peace they do not know. There is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads. No one who walks along them will know peace.

[4 : 57] And we know that in our lives. When sin gets in the way, we know that somehow there isn't a sense of peace in that. It just doesn't feel right.

And the Bible is really clear about sin. In Romans 6, it says, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. And Jesus commanded evil to leave people. He wants to get rid of that. Gets rid of it in our communities. Pollutes. And sadly, we've, often many of us have grown up with this sort of comedic view of sin and the devil.

It's sort of been diluted into something we can laugh and be funny about. Sin and address sin is, we know, is a serious business.

And it diminishes lives so serious that God sent his only son to engage with that. Yet people will still say and shrug their shoulders and deal with it and say, Well, the devil made me do it.

[6 : 06] And say, the devil made me do it. And to make light. And sin, we know, once it gets a foothold, and you will know this as well as I do, can bring in repetitive behaviours.

That somehow we're on this treadmill of sin that we repeat again and again and again. And the scripture talks about the things that are hidden in darkness.

The sin that we think that we hide from others. That we keep to ourselves. That nobody knows about. And ridiculously, we fool ourselves. Because the things that we do.

I remember, you know, in those wedding vows, I think it said something like, He knows all the secrets of our hearts. All the secrets of our hearts.

So, to bring things that are in the darkness into light so that God can actually deal with it and we can see it for what it is.

[7 : 03] And to bring the light of Christ into those dark places. My mother, as I've probably said before, had one of those Hoover vacuum cleaners with a little light on the front and a big bag.

You know, as though it was going to shine into the darkness and help you find the dirt. Maybe for many of us, we need that light of Christ to shine into our lives.

To show us where the dirt is so that actually we can deal with it. So, I thought I'd come up with a brilliant idea this morning. And I know that you love to respond here at Christ Church.

So, what we're going to do is, I know you're going to really love this this morning. We've got this clipboard here. And I've got some pens at the bottom.

So, I thought, wouldn't it be lovely if we all came up and wrote on here all the sins that nobody else knows about in our lives.

[8 : 02] You know, all those dirty little secrets, maybe, that we have. And what we'll do is we'll write them all up here so that everybody can see them and we'll bring them into the light.

Wouldn't that be a lovely idea? For those of you on the podcast, people are rushing forward now. Just grabbing a pen and just putting them up here so that we all know.

And I guess probably, you know, if we were bold enough, there would be things that we would want to write up like, my tax return.

Yeah? Isn't it interesting? You know, maybe that thing about sort of theft that we would want to write up. How about coveting? You know, write up coveting.

I'm never happy with what I've got. I always want something different. I'm always looking for the better thing. How about pride? That would be a good one.

[9 : 02] Put up pride. That would be interesting. That might be one of mine. Selfishness and greed. I have been buying pasta and toilet rolls.

You know? Maybe we need to write that up there for some of us. Wrath. We have a short fuse. You know, we were stood at Liddles watching the person in front of us who had filled up their thing with toilet rolls.

And all I wanted was two. Maybe envy. We could go on the seven deadly sins. The character issues that this brings out. And sometimes we need to name these things.

And that is where being a Christian comes in really helpful. Because in the Old Testament, there's this guy called Nathan. Nathan was a great guy. I love Nathan. He's a friend of David's.

And when David errs and strays, and he errs and strays, I can tell you, Nathan is there alongside him to say, Mate, come on.

[10 : 06] This is absolutely wrong. Come on. Wise up. What are you doing? Come on back. Come on back into that walk with God. Because you have strayed well and truly.

And this issue of maybe being accountable to one another is so important. You know? And it's how we water down things as well, isn't it?

We sort of make them more compliant so that we are happier with our sin. So that we can speak in terms about it. So let's put up there adultery.

But of course, we wouldn't put up adultery, would we? We would say, oh, maybe we had a fling. Isn't that a nice way of softening sin?

You know? They went over the side. We use all sorts of terms. Rather than actually naming it for what it is. There's another thing up there that maybe we want to say.

[11:08] Oh, yeah. Gambling. Gambling and the addictive behavior that that can get into. So what we would say is, oh, they have a little flutter on the horses.

Sounds a lot better, doesn't it? You know? The evil one is a great deceiver. The evil one is a great deceiver and will make what sin looks like almost as though it's okay.

Because it's all right and everybody else does it. And this idea, this thing of theft, you know, I fiddled my tax claim.

No, you didn't. No, it was theft. We render unto Caesar's what is Caesar's. We render unto God's what is God. And there is a little, a distinct difference between the two.

And Jesus knew that from Adam and the four that we have choices. Yet sadly, sadly, again and again and again, we choose the wrong path.

[12:05] Isaiah 53, we all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him, him, him, the iniquity of us all.

Sheep stray. There is a Jewish blessing which I love. And it's, they say, may you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.

It's a lovely blessing. It's the idea that you stay so close to Jesus that actually you can't stray. You stay close to him.

You're covered in the dust of your rabbi. You are staying so close that you hang on his every word of what he has to say to you. Clive, don't do that. You're thinking about doing that.

Stay close to me. And that way we'll be okay. And I would know, as many people here will know in listening on the podcast, the times that I have strayed have often been the time that I've been furthest away from God.

[13:07] And I've been tempted away to do other things that I shouldn't have been doing. And it wasn't my finest hour. It diminishes that stuff that is within us.

And it moves down. I mean, maybe if we drew a scale, you know, where do we think murder comes from? And stealing a few sweets at the sweet shop. You know, we love to judge everybody, don't we?

Everybody else. But actually, we don't turn the mirror back on ourselves and say, where are we walking in the light instead of the darkness? You see, I'm not saying this morning I have any sense of pious virtue.

Because the same demons that tempt you come and tempt me as well. That's where we are. But drawing close to Jesus and being close, we have this huge opportunity because that's why he came.

Arthur Conan Doyle, that great writer, thought he'd play a joke on his friends. And so with 12 of his most famous friends, each of them virtuous and pious people, he sent a note to them.

[14:10] And he said this, fly at once, all is discovered. Within 24 hours, all dozen of them had left the country.

What does that say about the things that are hidden in darkness that we need to bring out and be transparent as to who we are?

It encourages me that Paul knows that sin in his life. And he doesn't hide it. Paul doesn't try to sort of sweet talk us or the people that he was teaching.

In fact, he says, ruin and misery mark their ways and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Paul says this of his own life. And he says this, For I do not do the good that I want to do.

[15:15] That is honest, isn't it?

What an honest statement when you're actually being called by God to actually transform communities. Had Paul ended his letter there, I think we'd have found probably one of the most depressing things we'd ever read.

But he doesn't. Fortunately, we decide how we judge. If the truth isn't in us, we deceive ourselves. Often it's the small things. And it is the small things, isn't it?

It's the small things that catch us out. There was a guy who was 28. He was going to be made the president of one of the largest, largest multinational companies in America.

They had this amazing meeting. A 28-year-old is unheard of in the States to have somebody so young to head it up. So they had this amazing, the board thought he was great.

[16:38] It was fantastic. And after lunch, they were going to actually install him as the president of the company. At lunchtime, the guy went down. And unbeknownst to him and unbeknownst to the other people alongside him in the team that were there, they lined up to get their lunch.

And they noticed that this guy took a couple of butter pats that he should be paying for. And he put them under his napkin and just slid them over.

He went through. He didn't declare them. He didn't pay for them. That afternoon, what should have been the most amazing moment in his career and his life so far was dashed.

As other people said, if we can't trust you with so many dollars of butter pats, how can we trust you with this amazing company?

And he didn't get the job. It's the small things that we need to trust each other in and be reliant on one another. But here's the good news. Because the cross follows the X.

[17:45] And thankfully, Paul turned his attention away from his own sin and back to the one that had set him free. The one that sets him free. And the joy he had in writing of God's grace in Romans 8, one of the greatest chapters, I think, in the Bible that I come back to again and again.

Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Jesus Christ, the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

To be set free. It's good news, people. It's the gospel. Jesus has broken the power of sin in our lives. We don't have to be beholden anymore.

I nearly heard a cheer from those who were already looking through their Bibles from Mark 17. You know, it has set us free to be free, to be who the Lord wants us to be.

Paul says that God has already set him free, and by sending Jesus to defeat it once and for all.

That is a great message as we sing, as we wash our hands, to see Jesus has washed your sins away.

[19:02] For a people, a country, a nation, a world that needs to know that. And we are the carriers of the message, because we can be the ones that actually live that out.

This is coming from chapter 7, from a man who still battles with his sin.

That is hugely encouraging. Because if anybody here is... I had a friend... It was quite a big thing. A friend of mine fell very badly in sin.

And I thought it was amazing at a big conference. And a friend came, and we didn't hide it away. We didn't dust it away. We didn't put it away.

It was out there. And he just got a stone. And he just came forward, and he just put it on the corner of the platform. And he said, if anybody is without sin, that is there for them, if they would like to come and throw it.

[20:05] I thought, what a great acknowledgement that it is out there, and we can deal with it. We can talk about it. And we can deal with sin the way it should be, in the love of God.

The Holy Spirit comes to give us power to live lives that are worthy of him. Because greatest threat, the enemy's greatest threat to us, is an ongoing separation from God.

And he will make hay in those spaces. Believe you me. And Satan sees the trap in hopes we'll fall into it, because the Lord has graciously given us choices.

We've been given choices. I don't know what you do in your choices. It's just coming back to God again and again and again, and saying, what do I do in this? What do I do when this has been laid before us?

What happens when a lustful thought comes? What happens when we've got the opportunity to take a shortcut that's going to save us a few money, a few quid, but we know it's wrong?

[21:07] You know, when do we go back to the Lord, and we say, no, you know it's not right, Clive. You know, get back on board. Satan, get behind me. You know, freedom, true freedom of walking with God.

And when Jesus gave his life for the sake of sinners, the ultimate power of sin was defeated once and for all. Even though all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, when we accept that gift of grace and acknowledgement, the price is paid.

And as we sang, the debt is cancelled. God won't accept our resignation because we are not resigned to a life of sin.

That is not his choice for each and every one of us. But now he expects you to get to work on it. And we will. Sin doesn't have the power to hold you prisoner. God has broken the chains. And whoever is held by that, I really want you to hear that this morning. It won't hold you. It should never bind you. You can be free from whatever it is, that thought that comes back.

[22 : 18] And as soon as that clipboard came out, if the word came to you and you thought, oh my goodness, there is that thing that I have carried for years, it can be dealt with here and now, once and for all.

in Christ, there is no condemnation. In Christ, there is no condemnation. He's not going to come back and remind you. That's what the evil one does.

The evil one comes back and reminds you again and again, oh Clive, you can't do that because, do you remember about that? No. In Christ, there is no condemnation. Christ is here to build up, to encourage, to free us, to allow us to be all that he wants us to be.

Jesus proclaims to all who have a new life in him, your sins are forgiven. Your sin is forgiven. So many Christians struggle to grasp that issue.

They are forgiven. They are no more. We move on. We have freedom. If you need to break a chain today, I encourage you to do that. I encourage you in the power of God and the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus and all that he's done, that X doesn't have to mean the end.

[23 : 30] You don't have to carry that. Today is the day that you may, when the niggles come and the word comes, I can't do it. It is over. Lord, I give it to you and I know that I am forgiven.

I am free. I'll end with a true story. There was a young vicar, well he wasn't so young, but he had a call one day.

It was a lady that he knew who had come to church. She was doubled over. It was a scoliosis, I guess, probably, but literally bent over double.

And the afternoon was, could you come and I'd like to speak to you about something on a Sunday afternoon. Arrived at three. I knew it was a serious matter because all the best china was out.

There was theirs, the crusts were cut off of there and the best china was there. There was a lot of pluruminey talking around and then came the question, I know that I'm not going to go to heaven because of something that I did.

[24 : 42] Well, what did you do? I've never told anybody else this at all and you're the first person that I'm sharing it with. But I grew up with my loved one in school.

We were friends, we were childhood sweethearts. We got married. My husband went off to war, World War II. And during that time, and I don't know why, and I can't tell you now, but I had an affair with an American airman while he was away.

It was short, but it was hugely passionate. He went back to America. My husband came home from the war. We had children. We grew up.

We have grandchildren. My husband died two years ago. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't feel sinful in my life.

Is there any hope for me at all? We talked about repentance. We talked about the love of God. We talked about everything that we've talked about this morning.

[25 : 55] And as we prayed together, we wept and we cried together. And she accepted the forgiveness of God in her life. But it didn't end there.

Because I've seen a few miracles in my life. But as we prayed, she physically straightened up. And for the first time, for years and years and years, that woman stood tall in the power of Christ and in her forgiveness.

I don't know how she explained it when she came to church on a Sunday morning. But she was the, a woman that was wonderfully and beautifully saved by the love of God.

In that story, I just want to tell you that it may not be a physical, it is, whatever it is that holds you down, you leave it here.

And you can leave it here. And be restored and renewed. And that is our message to the people that we go out to. The message that we take out to the people that we meet day in and day out.

[27 : 08] I was thinking about this crisis that's going on at the moment. People in 12 months won't remember the crisis. What they remember is who responded to it. They'll remember the people that came to their door and phoned them up and said, can I leave your groceries?

Can I do this? Can I do that? That the love of God will shine out through us in what we do and how we respond. When God gasped can I do it now?
Could I do it now? Can I go through it? Can I do it now?