

Sin's Arrogance

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[0 : 00] If you'll take and open your Bibles to Genesis chapter 11, I'm going to just tell you something. I was trying to run the lyrics while singing, and that's an impossibility to run lyrics and sing at the same time.

So if you'd like a challenge on Sunday morning, most of the time Megan's doing it, Amy's done it. They can tell you it's a tough thing, but it'd be good to have some other people involved in helping in that.

So Genesis chapter 11, verse 1 through 9, and let's read the word of the Lord. Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

And it came about that as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they used bricks for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower whose top will reach into heaven.

[1 : 08] And let us make for ourselves a name. Otherwise, we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

The Lord said, Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they do. This is what they began to do. And now nothing which they propose to do will be impossible for them.

Come, let us go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city.

Therefore, its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth. And from there, the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the privilege it is to open your word, to see what it says, to be able to explain what it says, and then to sit here and allow your spirit to illuminate our minds, to convict us of our sins, and to help us to see the world as you see it.

[2 : 31] I pray, Lord, that you would convict us, and I pray that you would draw us by your spirit, give us faith, and may we trust in you in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Perhaps you've heard this being said before.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Those words were penned by Jim Elliott seven years before he and a group of missionaries were killed by Ecuadorean Indians that they had been able to establish a relationship with.

And it's one of those stories that make you always think about missionaries. There's so many missionaries that go, and so many terrible things seem to happen to them. They get sickness, family dies, they get cut off from different things, and you look at that, and it's often easy for us to say, you know, maybe they shouldn't be going.

[3 : 43] Maybe they shouldn't be doing something like this. But it really is the truth that God overcomes these situations. God overcomes this sin by his glory.

As a matter of fact, the story of Jim Elliott and Nate Saint and all those who were together ends in the very same way you would expect it from God, and that is that even though these men were all killed, all these fathers were killed, their families went back to that same exact tribe, poured out the gospel to them, and to this day that tribe have embraced the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can see their story in the movie called The End of the Spear if you want to take a look at it. But it's just such a great example and illustration of how God overcomes sin by his glory.

And that's a really important thing for us to get our minds around. It's a really important truth for us to kind of get out of the head and get it into the heart.

And to me, the story of the Tower of Babel does the same thing, and I want us to look at it today under two headings just to sort of try to get our minds and our hearts around this truth that God overcomes sin by his glory.

[5 : 13] And we're going to do that by looking, first of all, at man's sin, and then secondly, we're going to look at God's salvation. So as we look at man's sin, one of the things about the Tower of Babel is the question of what was their sin?

What was the primary sin there at the Tower of Babel? What was the main thing that was going on? And a lot of things have been proposed, but this is what I think the primary sin is.

In verse 4, it says, Let us make a name for ourselves, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. If we don't do this, we're going to have to scatter.

That is, I think, their primary sin. It wasn't building the city or building the tower necessarily, but it was the fact that their sin was not, they were not scattering.

In Genesis chapter 1, verse 28, God blessed them and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

[6 : 16] The whole point was, from Genesis chapter 1, They were to fill the earth. They were to scatter abroad and be over the whole face of the earth.

In Genesis chapter 9, verse 1, This is after the flood, Noah's gotten off the ark, and God to these eight people gives the same command.

God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. This was God's commandment about his creation, that they should fill the earth.

Now, why? Why did he want them to fill the earth? He had made Adam and Eve in his image. If you'd come to Sunday school this morning, you'd have seen that very truth, because we talked about what it meant to be in the image of God.

But this is what God was doing. He was created, Adam and Eve, in his image, And had they not sinned, Now, just play a hypothetical for just a second.

[7 : 17] Had they not sinned, they would have produced offspring first without pain, but they would have produced offspring who would have been in the image of God in the way that they were.

And then had they scattered around the globe, it would have been as though the earth was resplendent, and glowing and shining with the glory of God, as all of these offspring made in the image of God filled the whole earth.

God would have been world-renowned. And that's what he was after. But they did not want to do that. They did not want to be scattered. Instead, they wanted to be gathered together into one place.

Well, the other thing that we see in the story is we see, as they're refusing to be scattered, what they're after, or where it comes from, I should say, is this source, the source of their sin, is their arrogance.

In chapter 11, verse 4, they said, let us make a name for ourselves. Now think about that. They want to make a name for themselves. They've gathered up in this plain of Shinar.

[8 : 39] They want to be known all over the world. These are the people, 130 years before this, their ancestors escaped the wrath of God on an ark, and now they want to build a tower into heaven, is what the text says.

Into heaven. In other words, they wanted to build this tower in order to get right up into the heaven because it was their aim and goal to make a name for themselves.

They would be the ones who would not be scattered. They would be the ones who would not suffer again from God's flood. They would be the ones who would take heaven by storm and make a name for themselves.

They would be the ones who would not glorify God, but instead they would glorify themselves. You see, what we saw in the garden is that we saw the cause of sin, ignoring God's word.

And what we saw with Cain and Abel is the nature of sin. That is, its deep wickedness. What we saw in the flood is the scope of sin, and that is everyone all the time.

[9 : 59] And what we see in the Tower of Babel is the heart of sin, a promotion of our own glory over God's. In other words, the essence of sin is pride.

Pride is the essence of sin. Pride is when we seek to create, protect, and remodel our own image in order to make a name for ourselves instead of being concerned about the image of God.

Instead of being concerned for the glory of God, we're concerned for our glory and our name and not His name. Pride is when we seek to be the boss of our own lives, where we dare anyone to tell us what we can do or who we can be.

Pride is the essence of sin. The heart of sin is pride. And the truth is, is that even we as Christians, though we've been saved, though we've been bought with the blood of Christ, we still struggle with pride ourselves.

And don't sit there and tell me that you don't. I know I do. So if no one else needs the sermon today, I do. How do we see that we struggle with pride?

[11 : 32] Well, we could call this pride self-love, and you can see it when a toddler snatches a toy away from another toddler. You can see when a teenager walks into a room and thinks that everyone's immediately already talking about them.

Or you can see it in a mother who looks at her children's behavior and demands, well, I don't deserve this. You can look at it in a husband who's lost in himself and unengaged.

Or you can look at it in a culture that likes to market to us pride under the banner of mental health with the statement, you just need a little me time. Pride is always there.

Pride is even in that moment that you've done this good deed for your wife in fixing two bowls of ice cream because you know she would want a bowl of ice cream. And so you take the two bowls and you're walking.

And as you're walking, the thought process is something like this. This one weighs a little bit more. I could keep that for myself and she'd never know.

[12 : 35] She's not going to weigh them. But if I give her the one that obviously has a larger portion, especially if I give it to her like this, she's going to think that I'm being selfless.

I mean, in a moment of kindness. Am I the only one that has done this? I mean, you know, here's the thing.

Here's the thing. Right here in a moment of trying to be kind and loving toward our spouse, we can bring pride right into the middle of that because it is the essence of sin.

It's the root of the problem. And every one of us struggles with this. And as a Christian, the only way that we can fight against our pride is to run to the cross.

And let me tell you what I mean by run to the cross. What I mean is that the first thing is you need to do is you need to take a look truly at Christ on the cross.

[13 : 33] You need to go back and read the gospel accounts where he's on the cross and you need to look at how ugly that is. You need to look at how disgusting physically it is to see someone beaten beyond recognition, nailed to a cross, side ripped open.

You need to look at that because that's what our pride looks like. That's how wicked our pride is. It takes the perfect, sinless, righteous son of God and treats him like a common criminal.

So if we're going to fight pride as Christians, we've got to start by looking at what our pride looks like. But the second thing we need to understand is that as Christ died there upon the cross, the Bible tells us that he died for our sin, singular, he died for sins, plural.

It uses both of those. And the reason is is because his death covers not just the fruit of my behavior sins, but the root of the problem, my sin.

Because I sin fruit-wise in my behavior because deep down I'm a sinner at root. Do you understand the difference?

[14 : 58] You following me here? When he died upon the cross, he died not just for the little behaviors that I do, but for the deep down, deep-seated problem of who I am as a lost person and that is a sinner.

His death covers it all. And so if we're going to fight pride, not only to see how ugly it is, but know it's paid for not just when I act out on it, but the very essence of it being in me.

And the third thing is that because his death was accepted by his father, he was raised from the dead, seated upon the throne, and from there he poured out his Holy Spirit so that we might now have the empowerment by God himself to be able to fight against our sin.

This is who we are supposed to be. We're supposed to be people who follow in the image of Christ and to do so we have to fight against our pride. even for those who are not Christians, pride is the central problem.

Self-love is the central problem. Self-preservation is the central problem. And here's how we see it. I remember where I was September 11, 2001.

[16:22] And I remember the weeks following those planes taking out the towers and the Pentagon and I remember watching the church attendance increase and grow.

You know what I'm talking about. And it wasn't long afterwards that that bubble began to shrink again. It's because it's a phenomenon that the Puritan Thomas Manton said it in this way. He says, a fox scared off its prey will live to hunt another day. Lost people, when you were lost, when I was lost, lost people get scared sometimes because of things going on in this world or because difficulties in their life and all of a sudden there will be a moment in which, oh, I've got to put away my bad habits and I've got to go down to that church and I've got to listen a little bit, I've got to get a little religion because, man, things are not going well in life or not going well in my own heart.

But a fox scared off its prey will live to hunt another day. How do you stop a fox from eating your chickens? There's really only three ways.

Build a better coop, shoot him, or supernaturally turn him into a chicken. And that's what has to happen to you.

[17:51] Maybe, maybe you are a fox and maybe you're thinking religious thoughts and maybe you've even come to hear the preaching of the word because there's something in your life that's amiss and you don't know what it is, but you're scared, you're nervous, you're not sure if maybe you need to hedge your bets just a little bit, get a little religion so you can kind of maybe be okay with God.

And the fact of the matter is that soon as the tsunami of fear runs away, a fox is going to go back to its prey. And the only way that you can truly be changed is to be supernaturally turned from a lost person to a saved person.

And so today, I would call you and say to you, turn from your sin, come to Christ, and you will find in him a savior who will say to you, that if you come to him, he will in no wise cast you out.

So there's the sin of man, man's sin. We want to take then and look at God's salvation because what we're trying to get to is God overcoming sin by his glory.

So we need to see how he saves here, but I need to make this statement here, that when I say God's salvation related to the tower of Babel, I'm using that in a broad term of how God would rescue people, and it's not necessarily about the eternal life salvation we understand as Christians.

[19:23] I want you to think about it this way. We're going to get to the Exodus before too long, and in the Exodus we know that God rescues Israel out of Egypt. He saved them out of Egypt, but that did not make them saved in Christ.

You understand? Right? You're with me? Okay. So I'm sort of talking about that too, but we're going to blur it a little bit because this is an image or an illustration or a foreshadowing of what that salvation is going to be.

As a matter of fact, it even comes right out of this. So just bear with me for a second because when we talk about the Lord's salvation here, we've got to see a couple of things that are going on in the text.

In verse 6, it says, the Lord said, behold, they are one people and they all have the same language and this is what they began to do and now nothing which they propose to do will be impossible for them.

I always thought that was so strange. Impossible for them? Well, here's the truth of the matter. The truth of the matter is I don't understand why our English translations keep doing this to us.

[20:35] that word impossible should not be the word impossible. I mean, there's a way in which kind of a far-sighted someplace that it could sort of be like that, but really what the idea is, is that nothing is restrained from them.

That if this is where they began with their sin, then nothing would be impossible for them to run after. Like, if they would go after this, and what is this?

Think about that. We're going to storm heaven, take it over, so we're not scattered across the globe. I mean, do you see how arrogant that is, right? And if that's where they began, then how deep could it go?

They would be unrestrained in evil, is what God is saying here. And so, verse 7, he confuses their language. He's going to come down and make it so that they cannot understand each other.

Now, I just got to say, that sounds very different from the flood. I mean, we talked about the flood last week, and in the flood, you've got God's wrath being poured out in such a dramatic and harsh fashion upon all flesh.

[21 : 51] I mean, he doesn't just kill humans, but all the animals too. And yet, here's such arrogance of sin, and God just confuses their language.

I mean, that doesn't sound like much judgment, does it? That's because it's really more about him restraining them from doing any more than that.

And it's as though, in his kindness, he's sort of passing over this issue in order to bring something beautiful out of it.

So he then does scatter them. Verse 8, he scatters them over the whole face of the earth, which is what he wanted all along.

And what is he going to do with that? He's going to get glory through that. And to be able to see that glory, we need to kind of look at it through the lens of the New Testament for just a second.

[23 : 00] under the heading of the idea of the work of Christ. And that's where we have Revelation chapter 5, verse 9 through 10. In Revelation chapter 5, Christ, the crucified lamb, the lamb slain, is worthy to open up the seals, and all heaven begins to break out in rejoicing and praise because the lamb is worthy.

So listen to their praise of the lamb. worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals for you were slain and purchased for God.

You purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Verse 10, you've made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they will reign upon the earth.

That word tongue there, again, I'm not sure why our English translations keep doing this, but it's the word language.

Every time you see the word tongue, it's the word language. It's a Greek word that means language, but the point is that he's purchased for God men from every language.

[24 : 17] Now there's lots here, tribe, language, people, nation, but I want to point out their language because this is what's going on as God in his passing over judgment, his restraining judgment, puts all kinds of languages into the people and scatters them around.

Now that they're scattered all over the globe, he's ransoming from every tribe, nation, language, and people for himself.

Phase 1, scatter them. Phase 2, ransom them and guess what gets going. Now he's got his glory, image bearers around the globe for his glory.

But it doesn't stop there because there's a second part of this and it's the work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 that here is everyone speaking in their own language, unable to understand one another and God pours out his spirit upon his apostles and giving them a supernatural ability to speak in languages present in front of them so that everyone there hears in their own language and from this builds a new people, builds a new community, brings the old world together, Jews and Gentiles, into one new man by the power of the Holy Spirit from every language. God is bringing forth glory for himself as he ransoms and redeems people from every language that he scattered them into.

[26 : 00] So when the tower builders wanted to make a name for themselves, they wanted to become world-renowned. God is through them and through their pride making a name for himself and in the process, saving from every nation, tribe, people, and language.

He is truly renowned. When I was a kid, we lived in southeast Texas and the woods near our house caught on fire.

I do not remember the number of acres that were burned, but it was bad enough that I was standing next to our mobile home with its masonite siding, which is kindling, basically, with the water hose squirting it down because you could feel the heat on the house.

And our woods that my friends and I played in was just torched. And once they got the fire put out, you could walk through that forest and it was just black.

It was just charred. It was just scorched. But it didn't take long. And you'd walk out there and the coolest thing in the world was to watch from a stump there, a rock there, or just in the middle of the ground there, little green shoots.

[27 : 29] Little green shoots in the middle of scorched earth is one of the most beautiful sights because life couldn't be snuffed out by the fire.

I want you to hold that image in your head because this is what we're saying is that God is the God who takes and brings glory to himself and brings good to us in these difficult places, in these sinful places, out of sin.

He brings glory to himself and good to us. And the Tower of Babel is an example, but there's other examples in the Bible. Joseph is sold into slavery and it ends up saving thousands of Jews from a famine.

The plagues that destroyed Egypt brought salvation to Israel and set them free. David's sin with Bathsheba brought about the wisest man who ever lived and ruled over Israel, Solomon.

And out of the illegal trial and murder of Jesus, God ransomed people from every tribe, nation, language, and people. This is how God works. He is after glory for himself by saving out of judgment.

[28 : 33] judgment. That's what the gospel is all about. Let me just say this again. God brings glory to himself and good to us out of sin.

His primary objective is glory for himself and good for us. I know you're sitting there like, I get it, I get it, I get it. Why are you saying this over and over and over again? Because here's where I'm going.

How do you live out such a truth? You know, to have it in your head that God is after his glory and therefore after his glory brings good to us and saves us so that out of the scorched earth of sin brings forth the glory of God and the beautiful splendor of his plan and all that he's doing, that truth should make every difference in the world in your life.

And so, how? Or, let me say it another way, how can you lay hold of that truth and bring it from your head to your heart?

I'm glad you asked. Three things. Number one, you need to learn to love what God loves. Learn to love what God loves.

[29 : 51] in John chapter 17, verse 25 through 26, Jesus is praying to his father and in the middle of this prayer, as he's talking about what he has done for these men and he has made known the father to these men, he says in verse 26 that the purpose of all of this was so that the love with which you, father, loved me may be in them.

Jesus prayed that we would have a love for Jesus that the father has for Jesus. This is normal, everyday, operating Christian behavior.

I know that there is this temptation to say that because the pastor is the pastor, he loves the Lord in a more serious way. He's more serious about his Christian life.

I mean, he wears his tie, all he needs is a jacket now and everything would be all, you know, oh, I love the Lord, praise the Lord, everybody, yes. As though because you're a pastor, real life doesn't happen to you.

And so therefore, you have kind of this freedom to sort of live pie in the sky, eyes up to the heavens, and not really worried about what's going on in the real world down here.

[31 : 21] But we'll all tell you what's happening in the real world, pastor, every now and then because, you know, we know that you've got blessed by the Lord and you don't have to worry with all these things. And I say to you, the Greek term hogwash.

Normal, everyday, operating Christian behavior should be that you love what the Father loves. And that you hate what God hates.

If you're going to get this truth deep down, then you need to understand that God loves His glory. And if you don't love His glory, then that's a problem.

Second, second thing is you need to take the long look. You need to take the long look. In Hebrews chapter 11 verse 13, He's been talking about the patriarchs and the promises that they were given. And we're going to read through that and talk about those promises in the weeks to come. But in verse 13, it says something super fascinating. He says that all these, these patriarchs died in faith without receiving the promises.

[32 : 33] promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, they took a long look.

They looked to eternity. But what is it for us? We do not take the long look anymore. I mean, when we can have a movie on our phone like that, the fact that we have a phone that we're carrying around with us, when we can have a meal from a microwave thingy that you press a button and in 30 seconds, there it is, when we can drive up to a place and order a meal and they give it to us in

about five minutes and everybody's fed for less than \$50.

Well, not anymore, but you know what I'm saying. You know, we have a tendency to look at the trials and the tribulations that we're going through. We have a tendency to even look at our own sin problems and we look at the Lord and we want to say, well, why isn't this fixed yet?

Why is this still here? Why am I still struggling? And it's almost like the apostle Paul who prayed that this thorn in the flesh would be removed, but the father told him, no, my grace is sufficient for you. You're going to keep the thorn in the flesh. Well, for how long? Well, until you die. And the problem is, is that we are afraid to face the sorrow, we're afraid to face the suffering, we want these things, they come in and we want them to go out in about two months time and that's all the patience we've got with it.

[34 : 09] It's like raising your kids. We think that when they're 18 and graduated and have a decent relationship with their parents, success. But you know what? You never stop being a father. And you know, that's one of the things that I feel like, it's like I look at some of the older men in my life and I want to say to them, why didn't any of you tell me that when they turned 18, that's when parenting gets really hard?

Why didn't anybody tell me that? Well, I'm going to tell you this now. If you're younger than me and you have young kids, I'm just telling you, 18 is when parenting starts. Up to 18, that's just preparation.

It's not over. It's not over because now you're parenting in such a way that you have absolutely zero leverage. And what are you going to do?

So you've got to take the long look about everything. Because when we say that God's going to get glory over sin by concentrating on his glory and giving good to us in salvation, as we look at that, we're thinking to ourselves, yeah, but my life is falling apart and my kids are this and this situation is that.

When is this going to be solved? And I'm saying to you, stop looking in the next two months and start looking to eternity. Look. Take the long look. And the last thing I would tell you is this.

[35 : 34] You need to long for Jesus to be your greatest joy instead of anything else. else. You need to long for Jesus to be your greatest joy instead of anything else.

Jesus said it this way in Luke chapter 14 verse 26, if anyone comes to me and does not hate, just letting that sit for a second, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father, mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. No love, no joy should ever rival Jesus. And there's all sorts of things in life to be joyful about.

I'm not saying you shouldn't take joy in your kids, and I'm not saying you shouldn't take joy in a job well done, and I'm not saying you shouldn't take joy in a little rest and relaxation, but I'm saying that nothing can rival Jesus.

Because there is a joy, a kind of joy that rules our hearts. There's a kind of joy and happiness, gladness, a supreme satisfaction that so rules our hearts that it makes us feel significant.

[36 : 50] It so rules our hearts that it gives us security, it gives us purpose, it gives us meaning, it's a joy that directs all of our steps and all of our affairs. And you can see it in its really bad shape over here in idolatry or addiction as this thing, this substance that this person has to have is such a thing that gives them peace and gives them significance that it directs and guides and every single step that they take.

We are no different. We are built this way. And the one thing that should guide and guard and rule our hearts and give us significance and give us security is the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can see it easily in a toddler, right? That whole moment where they want that thing and they take it from someone. But we see it in us too.

We see it in our marriages. And so what we need to do is we need to make sure that we are supremely satisfied with Jesus.

if you could be supremely satisfied with Jesus, then you could put up with almost anything imaginable.

[38 : 22] And that's what it means. You got to have these things to be able to latch onto that truth and let it go deep down. And that's on a personal level, just on, and then on a corporate level, I'll just say this one thing.

On the corporate level, us as a church, if as a church body, we are going to latch onto the truth that God gets glory out of bringing us good, that we need to understand that we need to do what God's

doing.

And what is it he's doing? Well, number one, he's already ransomed people from every tribe, nation, language of people. But then through the gospel, he is bringing and gathering those who have been scattered into his church as he saves them.

And so we get to do what he's doing when we preach the gospel, when we go share the gospel with a friend, when we take our family and we do family worship with them, we're making disciples, we're bringing them into the fold, when we share the gospel with a friend at work, when we preach the gospel in a revival, anytime we go and share the gospel, we're doing what God's doing, and that is taking and bringing and gathering people in by the gospel who have been ransomed from every tribe, nation, language, and people.

And so the question just comes to this. Are you going to put aside normal operating Christian behavior and get really radical for the Lord Jesus Christ by making him your supreme joy?

[40 : 06] Or you're going to stay with the status quo. I beg you, I beg you. Make Jesus your supreme joy.

Then you'll be able to really grasp and hang on to, his glory, out of difficulties, by our good. Let's pray.