

Sin

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Date: 01 August 2019

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. My name's Dave. I'm one of the pastors here. Would you please pray with me as we come to God's word?

Our Father in heaven, we are scared of coming too close to you because we know that the light of your truth exposes us.

But Lord, I pray that you would convince our hearts this morning that you are good and that you want good for us.

And so your truth is good for us. So please open our hearts to hear you through your word this morning. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, so far in the series, as David introduced this morning, we've heard that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is complete and secure in himself.

He's perfect in knowledge, in power, love. And so he alone is worthy of all our worship. But if we're to know God as he actually is, he needs to reveal himself to us.

[1 : 30] And the good news is he has spoken to us. His words are spoken through people's words recorded in the Bible so that we can understand him and have life.

And we've heard that this one true and living God alone created the universe and rules the world. And so our lives belong to him. And so our lives belong to him. He created us unique to know him personally, to represent him, to be like him, to be with him.

So if we were created to know God and be like him in his character and to live for him in joyful worship as his people, as his community, why is there such a thing called genocide?

Why is there such a thing called domestic violence? Tax evasion, theft, pornography, adultery, sex, trafficking, royal commissions into sexual abuse?

[3 : 01] Why is there such a thing as breast and prostate cancer, economic depression, psychological depression, rage on social media, poverty, homelessness, chronic illness, war, refugee camps, terror attacks?

Why is there such a thing as bullying, anxiety, gossip, drought, suicide, bankruptcy, unemployment, discrimination, divorce, funerals?

I could go on. But I think we sufficiently get the point and we feel miserable enough.

This world has the marks of once being paradise. But the longer we live in it, experience tells us that wherever we look, whatever part we look at, everything screams at us, something is wrong. Something is seriously wrong. What is it?

[4 : 35] Depending on where you grow up, depending on what culture you live in, there's going to be a variety of answers to this question. And they range from evil spiritual forces through to corrupt social systems, through to really bad policies, government policies, through to just individual personality flaws or psychological brokenness.

And some people will even say there's not a problem at all. It's just the way things is. The question is, will we listen to the one who made us?

Will you listen to what he says the problem is? The whole Bible is God's words and actions to fix this problem.

You cannot, you cannot understand a single page of the Bible if you don't take this problem seriously. You cannot understand Jesus.

You cannot love Jesus if we ignore it. And because the whole Bible is God's response to this problem, we're only going to scratch the surface this morning.

[6 : 01] Next week, Rob will focus on God's solution to the problem. So please make every effort to hear that sermon. So what does God say the problem is?

Throughout the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the most common word used to describe our problem, as Alex has helpfully described and shown us, is along the lines

of failing to hit the mark.

It's falling short of the standard. Now, I think we can all easily understand what this means when it comes to our own standards for ourself.

So instead of me suggesting ways that we fall short, let me just ask a very simple question. Are you the person you want to be? We don't like to dwell on that question too long, do we?

And that's just our own standards. God has made us to be like him in his character. Are you the person God wants you to be?

[7 : 28] None of us are, not even close. We have fallen so far short. And we've fallen short because we refuse to let God be God.

Have a listen to how James Packer describes what this is in his book, God's Words.

I like his description. What is the essence of sin? Playing God. Playing God.

And as a means to this, refusing to allow the creator to be God so far as you are concerned. Living not for him but for yourself. Loving and serving and pleasing yourself without reference to the creator.

Trying to be as far as possible independent of him. Taking yourself out of his hands. Holding him at arm's length. Keeping the reins of life in your own hands.

[8 : 32] Acting as if you and your pleasure were the end to which all else, God included, must be made to function as a means.

That is the attitude in which sin essentially consists. Playing God.

This can be seen in really obvious ways or it could be really subtle. This can have huge social implications, consequences.

Or it might have very little effect on those around us. And when we play God, it can feel like we're succeeding. We don't even feel bad.

We actually think we're doing what's right. So even though dodgy behaviour and the damage we do to others in our own conscience, all these will testify against us very clearly.

[9 : 42] The essence of our problem can't be fully measured by these things. We only see what we're truly like when we look at the perfection of what God is like.

He's got to be our reference point. So what's seriously wrong with us? We fall short of being like God because we refuse to let God be God.

And instead we play God. How serious is this condition? What's the extent of it? What's epidemic? It's universal. Every person in every culture, every country, throughout all human history, has fallen short of honouring God because of their refusal to let God be God.

Everyone. Except one person. And it isn't me, in case you're wondering.

[10 : 54] When our ancestor Adam, the first man on earth, who walked with God, knowing him and being like him, and everything in the world was as it should have been, when Adam chose to start playing God himself by disobeying God, because he is the head of the human race, he represented the entire human race.

And so we all feel the consequences of his choice. It's in the family. But we also inherit the same attitude from Adam.

That attitude of refusing to let God be God. And so we too produce the same rotten fruit. The one unifying factor across all people is the world's refusal to let God be God.

Our condition is universal. And within each individual, it's total. It is spread all over.

Now, this doesn't mean that we're as rotten as we could be. By God's grace, we're not. But it does mean that our refusal to let God be God dominates every aspect, from our choices to our ability to think wisely, and even the desires of our heart.

[12 : 45] So if you look at the first verse of Psalm 36, transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart.

The desire to go against God is constantly speaking, influencing the very core of our being, the centre from which the rest of our lives flow.

So if you think of a nature reserve, so Blackbutt Reserve, when I first moved to Newcastle, I was so confused by Blackbutt Reserve.

One second I'm driving at night and there's civilisation all around me. I take a turn and suddenly I'm surrounded by bushland. It's untouched by civilisation.

It's a beautiful spot. Go for a walk there sometime. But within the make-up of the human person, there is no nature reserve.

[13 : 52] There's no part of us that hasn't been infiltrated by sin. Our thinking, verse 4, he plots trouble while on his bed.

Our choices. He sets himself in a way that is not good. Our words and behaviour, verse 3. The words of his mouth are trouble and lies, deceit. He has ceased to act wisely and do good. Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his or her heart.

There is no nature reserve. And therefore we are unable to change ourselves. We are unable to respond to God as we should.

We are unable to do good. We can do good in terms of being better than others when we compare ourselves to others.

[15 : 02] But in the sight of God, we can't do good. Sin is affecting everything. So where does this leave us?

Where do we stand with God? We are lifeless towards him. Even though he created us to know him, to be like him, to worship him, enjoy him forever, in our fallen Adam-like condition, we are totally insensitive and apathetic to what God says.

There could be a great amount of religious activity on the outside. But Jesus called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs.

They were dead on the inside. No affection, no sensitivity towards God as he has revealed himself in his word. Never tasting the life that is to be in right relationship with God.

Spiritually lifeless and dead. We do not know God. And the end result of refusing to let God be God is pictured in verse 12.

[16 : 39] There the evildoers lie fallen. They are thrust down, unable to rise. Falling short of honouring God as God will result in God causing that person to lie fallen forever.

Our physical death is a foretaste of the judgment that awaits everyone who remains spiritually lifeless towards God. And yet despite this, there is no fear of God before their eyes.

no fear of the judge of all the earth who will hold us accountable.

I've been watching a detective show recently based on real events, which is a little disturbing. But the crimes can be horrific. But there's a difference between criminals.

There's one type of criminal who clearly regret what they did. And they're afraid of the police. And so they hide.

[18 : 04] They cover up. They're afraid. But then there's just a few who in the depths of their evil intent, they're not even afraid of the consequences.

verse 1. There is no fear of God before his eyes.

Falling short of honouring God because we refuse to let him be God, this condition is universal. It is total. It makes us spiritually lifeless towards God.

We have no fear of God. And therefore, we're destined to receive what the Lord is right to give us, which is death.

death. It's heavy, isn't it?

[19 : 14] This dark picture of our condition is so bleak. I think it raises the question, if it's really this bad, why doesn't it always feel this serious?

I think verse 2 gives us the reason. For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.

We flatter ourselves. I think we can flatter ourselves in two different ways and I'm sure there's more. First, we flatter ourselves by living up to the standards of our society, our world, which just lowers the bar, changes the bar, however they see fit.

So a very small example of this is there's a trend at the moment where it's socially good to be conscious about buying things that are ethically produced.

Now that's excellent. That's a good trend, isn't it? It's brilliant. But it still falls short. Jesus says, life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions.

[20 : 40] So our society tries to be ethical all the while remaining thoroughly committed to materialism. so long as we measure ourselves by society's standards, we can flatter ourselves that we are by and large doing what is right.

I'm a good person. But we need to remember that the world is against God. We need to take seriously the warning in James 4.4 which says, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

We flatter ourselves by just comparing ourselves to the world around us. The world that wants nothing to do with God. And I think we can flatter ourselves by letting something other than God rule our life.

So I use money to try and demonstrate this. Money is a big one. The Bible has a lot to say about it. Money can be more important to us than God.

It fills our imagination. And we look to money to give us all that God alone can give us. Security, status, provisions. And so we let money rule our lives.

[22 : 10] But then if we let money rule our lives, we let money tell us what's right or wrong. The love of money starts telling us keep it for yourself.

Invest. God says, give cheerfully. Love of money says, work to spend on yourself. God says, work so that you have plenty to share with others.

Love of money says, worry, you never have enough. God says, don't worry, you have me. When we allow the love of money to rule our lives, we excuse ourselves for doing wrong and for not doing what's right.

we call greed being responsible. And we flatter ourselves and hide from God's standards by letting something else rule our lives.

So if our condition is as serious as God says it is, how can we treat it as seriously? It's only when we measure ourselves to the perfection of God will we see how far we have fallen short.

[23 : 41] It is only then that we can begin to hate our condition. And it's only when we appreciate that there is no nature reserve in us that we begin to look for a solution outside of ourself, outside of our world, outside of our own efforts.

this is exactly why the psalm changes tone so drastically from verse 5 onwards.

Read or listen, I don't mind. your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds, your righteousness is like the mountains of God, your judgments are like the great deep.

Man and beast, you save, O Lord. And listen to what God wants to give us instead of what we deserve. How precious is your steadfast love, O God. The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

With you is the fountain of life. In your light do we see light.

[25 : 15] There is only one person who has ever walked this earth who is free of this condition, who is free and able to save us. His name is Jesus. We'll hear more about him next week.

Please make sure you hear it. God invites you. In fact, he tells you, take refuge in me. Feast from my abundance, my steadfast love.

Drink from my delight. I am the fountain of life. Don't stay in darkness. Come into my light.

Something is seriously wrong.

Don't look inside yourself. Don't look to the world for an answer, for a remedy. You will not find it.

Will you keep flattering yourself?

Or will you come near to God as he has revealed himself in his word? even even though his light will increasingly expose how far you have fallen short.

[26 : 31] Will you come to him who is the fountain of life and make this psalm your words? How precious is your steadfast love, oh God.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Father, judge of all the earth, nothing is hidden from your sight.

We can fool ourselves, we can fool those around us, but you search our hearts. why you would invite us to come to you for safety and life instead of making us life fallen.

We can't fully say. All we can say is how precious is your steadfast love, oh God. Continue your steadfast love to us, your people, who have taken refuge in our Lord Jesus Christ.

keep drawing us individually and as a church into your light. Not afraid to let our sin be exposed because you are the fountain of life.

[27 : 56] And by your light we see light. In Jesus' name, Amen.