

Taking Sin Seriously

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[0 : 00] Well, I have to tell you, I love listening to you sing. I always do. And so when I say let's turn in our Bibles, it is against the backdrop of the sweet, joyful singing!

As we've thought about the Lord Jesus Christ and his word. I want you to turn in your Bibles to first, no, we're not going there first. I want you to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 45, verse 6 and 7.

I'm curious. I'm curious. I'm curious. How many of you here really struggle with sin?

Don't wave your hand at me and say, hey, that's me. I'm all over it, man. I'm doing the best I can.

But how many of you find yourself on a regular basis grieved, burdened, disappointed with the sinfulness of your soul?

How many of you would like to be different? Honestly. Tired of struggling with the same old things over and over again.

[1 : 34] I got good news for you. When we get home, it's going to be great. People ask me, how's it going? When I say, any better than I be dead. Because the next step is always victory and it's joyful.

And the passage that I want us to look at first this morning is a passage in Psalm 45 where the psalmist expresses joy at the character of our Savior.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your throne is a scepter of uprightness.

Now listen to this and memorize it.

Have it stick in your mind and let it be a benchmark, a measurement about where your heart needs to be. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore, God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions. I was driving yesterday.

[2 : 45] You have been praying about the possibility of me serving as an interim pastor in a place. And I was driving down the road to a place that had asked me about coming in the future to minister a little bit occasionally.

And as I was driving, I tried to call my wife. Because there was something that I thought really desperately needed to be done. And how many of you know that when you have a good idea, everybody else in the world should have the same good idea?

You know, it's like, what's the deal? And I thought, my wife's on task. I'll call her and she'll answer the phone and it's all taken care of. So you know how it worked out from there, right?

We have a cell phone that my wife has and we have, and we also have a hard line because our cell phone... Anyway, so I was alternating between calling her cell phone and calling her hard line, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

And so here I am driving to meet with a group of men about serving in an interim pastor eventually in the future. And a very spiritual thing to do, you know.

[3 : 50] And I'm driving along and my wife's not picking up her call. How would you do on that case? God is in control.

You know, I'm hearing Twyla Parris in the background. Some of you don't know who that is. But, you know, it's like, I'm... No, that's not what's happening. I was beginning to devolve into a kind of an attitudinal snit.

Just temporarily. I got to tell you. Thank the Lord. I mean, it kind of dawned on me. You know, Tim, who are you? She's probably doing something important.

She was actually drying her hair, which was reasonable. Because I wanted her to go out and make a public appearance to pick up something for me. And finally, when she did answer the call, she was in the car on the way there.

I was just so tickled. Particularly that I hadn't gotten angry. And that sin hadn't entirely gotten the best of me. I hate sin.

[4 : 55] I struggle with it. I don't know about you. But it's a real bother to Tim Knoyer's life. And the passage that we are going to look at this morning in 1 John 2 is all about sin.

I thought to myself, so Tim, since you've got five sermons left, what would you like to preach on? Sin is my favorite topic. And so there it is. I get to talk on sin. But it's in the Bible.

And we want to get to it. And what I realized as I was in prayer and study, there's not a one of you here this morning that is not actively engaged in dealing with sin.

There are some of you here that don't know Christ. And sin has absolutely overwhelmed your life. And it is leading you to eternity apart from God and hell.

There are others of you here that are believers that know the blessing of his grace but still continue that struggle.

[6 : 08] And so it is my rich privilege this morning to open the Bible and tell you that you do not have to be a captive to that problem.

That's the truth. Chapter 2, verse 1, let me read it to you. And I want you to follow along in your Bible while you do this. Multitasking.

Multitasking. Multitasking. You are to listen to the preaching of the Word of God and you are to pray for the man who delivers it at the same time.

That's what the Scripture calls you to. 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 1 and 2. So you pray and listen at the same time. So let me read it to you and you follow along here. It says, my little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

[7 : 21] And by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Whoever says, I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps his word and in him truly the love of God is perfected, by this we know that we are in him. Whoever says that he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. He's not in him. He's not in him. He's not in him. He's not in him. It would be inappropriate for me to not follow the order of the text.

And I don't think it is an accident that when John the Apostle wrote to the church, that he put this little part at the beginning when he says, my little children.

By the way, any of you that kind of, a little Bible knowledge, you remember how John was known early on in his apostolic development process, right? Remember, what was he known as?

[8 : 26] The sons of, well, remember some people were having an attitude towards Jesus and John wanted to solve it, right? Go out there and be peace and light and throw a little bit of love around, you know, just burn them.

You know, in fact, it was, hey, can I, hey, could I call down light, you know, fire from heaven and smoke those guys? John was a fiery man.

Now, over time, the love and work of Christ led him to be exceptionally tender. And here he is towards the end of his life, and he writes to this church, and he's concerned for this church's spiritual well-being.

Look at me. I've been your shepherd, your pastor, for a number of years, and I happen to know that as I'm struggling with sin, you guys are struggling with some of those issues. I happen to know some of them, too.

And so I come to you and I say, my little children, there is an affection here, and I think it's important for us to understand that John loved those that he was writing to.

[9 : 30] He really cared about them. The idea that those who care for the church professionally, pastors, are there to kind of be distant instructors of righteousness really finds no support in Scripture.

Do you understand what I'm saying? It's like kind of a guy who dispenses wisdom and stuff and says the right things and recites the Bible, but there's no affection, there's no passion in relationship with people.

That's not the way it is. Godly ministry always involves an affection for the people that you're engaged with. Does that make sense to you? By the way, we know the importance of that when you pay attention to how children interact with parents.

One of the things I've noticed over and over again is when a child is doing something wrong and the parent corrects the child by voice, you know, it's like, hey, Bubba, don't do that.

You know what the child immediately does? Well, some children, I should say. The child looks at the parent's eyes. What is the child trying to figure out to start out with? Well, the child's trying to figure out, do you love me?

[10:48] Where am I at in this food chain? Because that issue of the affection of the one who is ministering the Word or ministering discipline is important. I am reminded of the affection that John had here, and I'm reminded of the affection that the Apostle Paul had for the churches that he wrote to.

Remember, he says this, I labor and travail until Christ be formed in you. Remember, he also talked in 2 Corinthians of the burden of caring for the churches. His concern was something that was evident.

And you stop and think about Paul. He was a preeminent theologian, and yet the thing that people remembered about him was not just his teaching, but was his affection for them.

And here is John at the very beginning of dealing with a very difficult subject in the body of Christ, namely the ongoing struggle that everyone has with sin.

He starts out and says, Hey, listen, my little children. I can still remember reading a portion of a book by Charles Bridges, a Puritan.

[12:02] And years ago, I remember reading it early in my pastoral ministry, and he made this comment that when people ask themselves the question, Does Jesus love me? One of the things that should assure them of Christ's love for them is the love of their pastors and their teachers for them.

So let me stop here just for a moment and make this point clear. If you are in a teaching phase or ministry of this fellowship and your students do not understand that you love them, you are not hitting the Bible mark of ministry.

Is that a fair statement? Here is John at the beginning of the business of dealing with a sin problem in the congregation, and he says, Let's start out, and I want you to know that I love you, my little children.

Well, with that said, can you imagine just the impropriety in today's culture of somebody standing at the front and saying, Guys, I'm really concerned with your sin problem?

Hmm? What? You are? I mean, compared to what I see in the world around, why are you concerned about my sin problem? The only thing I'm dealing with is attitudes occasionally. This is just a real confession.

[13:32] I haven't had a speeding ticket in quite some time. Thank God. Not that I haven't deserved a couple. But I am struggling with accepting the fact that there are state police officers that cherry pick on Wilson Road when I drive home.

There is a portion of Wilson Road that goes from 45 to 35. Guess where the state police officers park because they know that's easy picking, and they have a quota.

And so I'm driving by there just thinking, Yes, Lord, Romans 13 is in the Bible, and you have put them there for me. Oh, my. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

Question. How serious are you about sin?

I remember a couple years ago, we had a norovirus epidemic here at church. How many remember that? It's one of the moments of our history that it should be chronicled in our annuals somewhere.

[14:50] But there was a person who got sick right at the end of the service, and happened to, I don't know what the word is appropriate for this moment, but they happened to discharge out in the lobby.

And then the entire congregation waded through the mist. And we actually had 96 or 90, do you remember? It was in the 90s. We ended up having the health department come here and use us as a test case.

And norovirus. How many people die from norovirus? Not that many. But it was really kind of interesting to hear people going apoplectic about norovirus. I mean, they were really serious.

I'm not going to get sick. You know, it's like, what happened to Christian charity and kindness and concern for one another? I mean, do you know what happened when during the Middle Ages, Christians were in communities that had the plague?

Huh? Does anybody know? Christians developed church, I mean, hospitals, and took care of the sick. Well, my point is, is when that norovirus thing swept through here, it was really interesting. [16:03] Norovirus is like a panic state for people. I don't want to, you know, it's like, oh, norovirus. I don't see anybody acting that way towards their sin. And sin is far more dangerous to you than norovirus is.

So I want you to understand when John says this, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And I want you to etch that into your thinking. The Holy Spirit is interested in you not sinning.

Can I say that again slowly? Because I don't think you believe it. The Holy Spirit is interested in you not sinning. He's interested in me not sinning.

Why is that? Well, for the unbeliever, sin is just the way it is.

Am I right? I think about the passage, and I think it's Isaiah, Jeremiah, where it says, you know, can the Nubian change his skin or the leopard change his spots? It says, you've got no chance.

[17:16] You're going to do what you do. Unbelievers are snared, are trapped by sin. And you have to face that. You know, sometimes we as believers act, I can't believe they did that.

Well, they're just, they're being where they are. Give them a break and give them Jesus and hope that he redeems them from the fall and the curse and changes their hearts until people have a change of heart.

They're really not going to do anything but sin. But believers, we're not slaves anymore. Is that right? How many of you agree?

We're not slaves. We're not slaves. We don't have to. I like that. But I'm still struggling with it. Why is sin such a bother?

Well, sin is terrible in so many ways. And let's take some time to think through, why is John concerned? Well, for one, sin un-God's God.

[18:18] Every sin is an affront, offense, to his holiness, to his wisdom, to his goodness, to his moral purity. Every time we sin, we tell God that he is not the one who counts.

I mean, I'll go back to the illustration of having called my wife six or seven or eight times and hoping that she'd pick up the phone because I was really, really intent on her picking up some rolled rubber for our porch.

And when she didn't pick it up, my first thought, how many of you know this, whatsoever thoughts are pure, whatsoever things are good, da-da-da-da, my first thought was not, you know what? She's probably cooking my favorite meal.

I didn't think that. You know, she's probably doing my laundry and folding it like she always does, and I'm amazed. It just happens. And it's like, I didn't think that either. But at the heart of it, what I was really doing was I was displacing my sovereign God who was absolutely in control whether or not I get rubber roofing on Saturday.

I thought my agenda was more important than his agenda. Any time you sin, you un-God.

[19:40] God. Secondly, sin is a denial of the power of the gospel. Write that down, please, and have it stick.

Sin is a denial of the gospel. When believers sin, the believer is saying that Christ's sacrifice for us is insignificant in comparison to our momentary lust or anger or greed.

furthermore, we say that the power of the gospel to deliver us from bondage to sin is practically ineffective. In other words, it really doesn't work.

Yesterday morning as two of us were bringing oatmeal to different people, one of the things I enjoy about doing that is I have opportunities when the door is open to tell people that I know the only one who can change their messy lives.

I don't say messy, but I mean, when you're living in a tent and it's five below, I don't have to say that. And you're living in absolute squalor.

[20:51] You know what the word squalor, some of you have rooms that are messy, but no. I have the privilege of saying I know the only one who can change your life, who can deliver you from the hopelessness of your sin and can not only grant you complete forgiveness, but can help you stop being who you are.

I love the fact of the gospel that because I am a child of God, I don't have to stay the way I am. So when a believer sins, in practical terms, he is saying I deny the power of the gospel.

Now, everybody smile. You know, we're not into adultery. We're good with that. We've not stolen a lot. We've not murdered anybody here.

You know, I mean, we're good. We're good. But I'll tell you what, we have some people that are pretty good at being pouty and fussy and gossipers and unhappy and malcontents. Do you follow what I'm saying?

Does that bother God at all? What do you think? Does it bother you? I had to mow our lawn yesterday.

[22 : 12] yesterday. We have a very small lawn and my dog uses it twice a day. I don't need to go any further than that, right?

You understand what I'm saying? So one of the things that goes with prepping the lawn for mowing is understand, do I need to go further? We're okay. I have to go out and do a little patrol before I go out and mow.

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And then I mow and enjoy. But I was about 80% through and suddenly I got this wafting odor of processed dog food and I'm thinking, ugh, ugh, ugh.

You know, scamper over there to the hose and you know, pfft. You know, it's no problem. Dog stuff on my shoe. I'm going inside the house and you know, new.

Everybody listen. God takes our sin far more seriously than we do.

[23 : 22] Sin is a denial of the power of the gospel. One of the reasons more people have not come to faith is frankly, they don't see that God changes hearts as much as they should.

You are either living proof that Jesus died and rose again and he can deliver people from sin or you are a practical denial of the gospel you proclaim.

Third thing is sin leads to unwise and irrational choices. Write that down because we don't believe it. The sinner can talk himself into thinking that his sin is the best course of action for the moment.

I mean, have you ever bumped into a sinner and said, why did you do that? And they immediately say to you, well, that was the best idea I had. They never say that after the fact. But as they're processing, should I do that, what are they thinking?

What do you think they're thinking? Well, this is really going to hurt in the end. This is going to lead to my spiritual compromise. It's going to cause heartache.

[24 : 37] It's going to grieve my family. It's going to ruin my testimony. It's going to harm my... No! I think about that passage in Romans chapter one, and we'll not get into it here, but remember Paul writes this.

He said, God gave them up, God gave them up, God gave them up. Three times he makes that point that, you know, God lets people have their way, and what happens? How many of you noticed, listen, how many of you noticed that every time you sin that you do not deal with that sin and confess it and forsake it and repent, it gets worse?

It gets worse? It gets worse? One of the advantages of being 69, almost 70, is I have all kinds of scar tissue from Jesus dealing with me pretty firmly about my sin.

You get it? And every now and then when I begin messing with an attitude that could take me into the absolute swamp, he kind of touches on an old scar and says, hey Tim, do you remember this one?

Yeah. Don't mess with me. Remember the story of Jacob? Jacob wrestled with God and God did what? Crippled him. I would venture to say, every now and then when Jacob started getting an attitude, God would kind of bring along a little bit of hip dysplasia.

[26 : 00] You know, okay, I get it. Get back on the road. You know, I got it. Come on. Sin leads to unwise and irrational choices.

And by the way, sin to God Satan does not mind how small a sin he can get you to commit so long as you let that sin go unconfessed and unforsaken.

Everyone will equally lead you to the pit. Sin brings death.

I think about the statement, sin is an opportunistic virus that always destroys its host.

Sin produces infection in our heart that leads to incredible heartache. This morning, I was listening to Caleb Perrin teach our young people.

[27 : 11] He was talking about how David ended up in such a disastrous situation with the wife of Uriah the Hittite. It was a clear exposition of how David made the journey and ended up being a murderer and an adulterer.

And I have to tell you, don't ever think that David did not in the later time of his life have regrets about his sin. So let me say this practically speaking, I wonder this morning whether you take sin seriously.

Do you fear it? Do you honestly fear it? Do you loathe it? Do you have a remember I talked about mowing and stepping in the wrong things in the yard?

Most of us don't say hmm that's nice. It's like do you loathe it? Is there some kind of visceral reaction to sin in your man that was wrong?

I gotta be honest boy it sounds like I'm not honest most of the time trying to do so now I'm gonna try it now. I was born an incredibly moody self focused arrogant proud stubborn sinner and thankfully Jesus saved me and I'm hoping that as I get older I get better at being less sinful now being at the age I am I'm watching some people get older and older and older they get crotch eater and crotch eater and I'm asking myself Lord don't let that happen either take me home or change me but I've asked my wife to help me with that too I don't want to be an old person who's grumpy all the time I gotta tell you getting old is not half as much fun as I thought it would be but being grumpy is not God's answer to being old and I gotta understand that the attitude you have towards sin is going to end up determining!

[29 : 34] I want to be that way I want to have a sincere passion for what is right and I want to have a visceral reaction when I see sin in Tim Knoyer's life and if I were to plead with Christ to do a work in your hearts as people of this fellowship I would desire to see you grow in your personal hatred for your own sin and how will you know that you're making progress in that by how quickly you confess and how earnestly you forsake and how passionate you are in dealing with that in your life well

I'm really glad that's not all the passage has let's come to the next part that is even much better okay but if anyone does sin can you read the next part we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous now listen to me the significance of the problem of sin can be balanced out so you don't think sin's a big problem well then you don't need a big advocate but if sin is a big problem then you have the comfort of the remainder of verse one which says and if we do sin we have an advocate with the father who is Jesus Christ the righteous so I want us to think a little bit about the blessing of his advocacy you see Paul was dealing with people in the church who were deceiving themselves about their sin problem some of you never heard me preach before and you're going to go home and someone's going to say what did you hear at church the guy was all over sin I'm probably not going back but you know it's a little bit like it's like a surgical! nurse do you follow me in surgery how many people care about infection the people who are involved in surgery really want the people that come into the surgery room to go out pretty safe and I'm interested in you going out safe so here's John writing in John 1 he says listen if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves you're fooling yourself if you don't think you have a problem now verse chapter 2 I don't want you to sin but if you do you have an advocate what is an advocate the Greek word is used here is not a word that is easily translated into English stop is easy you get it stop stop but the word that is used here is a word that if you were to compare translations you'd have advocate you would have helper just different words because the word is one that carries with it a lot of meaning of both relationship and help you see

Jesus is the one who when we sin restores our hope have you ever felt broken by the sin that you've committed that's it I'm done you know it's worthless Jesus is your help have you ever found yourself just kind of totally discouraged with why did this happen again I mean me being a moody person is like I don't want to be that way and Jesus is my comforter he is the one who revives passion he's the one who stirs your heart with a longing for holiness he's the one that leads you to actually have a hatred for sin I hate it I hate it he's the one that stirs your desire for godliness I want you to understand this morning that no believer should ever feel hopeless and in bondage to sin and if you're here this morning and let me put it this way if you're here this morning and you're not dealing with sin then you're either dead or you're insensitive to the problem and if you are here and you're facing the reality

I've got to struggle with sin and it's not something I like having I want to welcome you to remember that Jesus is your advocate and your ally and your companion and your helper and he listen to me he is actually more interested in you having victory over sin than you are why is that because he paid for your salvation with his own blood you're walking advertisement of what he can do with a ruined mess right and he's all over that and so this morning if you are struggling with that battle with sin I want you to know that Jesus is your mediator he is your advocate he is your ally there's

something else that we find there in the passage!

[34 : 59] verse 2 it says he is the propitiation for our sins now I would not ask ten of you to read that out to get that pronunciation right you know three years in seminary and I got it he is the propitiation for our sins you got it what's that mean well in broad terms it means that Jesus has satisfied the righteous judgment of God against my sins what's the consequence that and the reality of this is that when Jesus died on the cross he satisfied the debt my sin had created and God poured out on Jesus the full measure of wrath that I deserved and will ever deserve I think about the words of the song it says my sin not in part but the whole is nailed to the cross and I what I bear it no more I wonder whether or not when you find yourselves struggling with the shame and guilt of sin if you don't remind yourself that

Jesus died for you and he delivered you from that slavery and he is the propitiation he is the satisfaction for your sin problem I have to confess this morning that if I were to be given about four more weeks these six verses I could stay in without any problem we could deal with who did Jesus die for and that would be legitimate conversation but we're not going to we're going to come now to the last part and that is what we find there in verse three four five and six and let me kind of help you understand that one of the things that John's letter aims at is helping the believer figure out the authenticity of their I ask people so do you know Jesus well of course I know Jesus I grew up in America no no no that's not what I'm asking do you know Jesus well yeah

I was baptized do you know have you come first of all as a bankrupt sinner said my life is an absolute mess and I can't do anything about it but I believe Jesus died for my sins and I trust him as my savior well John writes to help us confirm our relationship to figure out are we really saved and I think it's appropriate to check your birth certificate every now and then to say do I know him well here's what we see there in the passage verse three and by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments I'm going to try a little bit of math here so bear with me just so you know do you know what a hypotenuse triangle is there are some of you that say no I have no idea there are some of you saying absolutely

I got that well in the process of constructing our what I think is our last remodel I've been you're laughing at me I've been working a lot on trying to figure out how I know that walls are at right angles to another wall you know it's inappropriate because you get on the far side of the room and you wonder why the trim is not working and all that kind of stuff so hypotenuse how many of you understand the little mathematical equation of three four five see you can think you've got it right but then you stretch the tape measure across the hypotenuse and you find out I'm not there so John gives us a way of figuring out if we're really there or not here's the passage and by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments my relationship is confirmed it's documented it's verified by my desire to obey him hey keeping his commandments doesn't get me there keeping his commandments doesn't keep me there keeping his commandments just helps me know

I am there and so here's John saying hey listen obedience confirms our salvation and it's appropriate for you who are sitting here this morning in the ongoing journey of life to ask yourself so what is my heart's attitude towards his word do I really want to obey him or am I so full of myself that when I sin I think it's everybody else's fault and if they change I be okay if we say that we are a believer but we have no interest in obeying his word and we really don't care what he wants there's a good reason to question whether or not we really have what we think we do I got to tell you this Satan specializes in deception make sense Satan specializes in deception I think it was

[40 : 36] Wednesday I'm working on my computer and up pops this little thing says you need immediately it came right out over blanked everything else on my screen you immediately need to call this number because you've been infected with a virus and blah blah blah blah blah now at my age I figured I'm not sure so I called Pastor Saul I have this I was trying to study for Wednesday night and you know I'm under a deadline and he says it was gone and sure enough I didn't have a virus Satan is a specialist in deception and there are some he is deceiving Satan loves that and so we come to one other little issue there in verse 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked what's that saying if you really have the relationship that's marked by communion it's reasonable to expect that your walk matches his walk so that brings me full circle to the verse

I started with how many of you remember it huh Psalm 45 verse 7 also recited in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 9 thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity listen the characteristic of a growing

believer is a progressive desire for holiness and a greater hatred for personal sin how you doing are you on the uphill journey or are you fooling yourself that's why John wrote to help us with self diagnosis by the way wouldn't you rather deal with self diagnosis than having him bring somebody else along to help you and all God's people said preach it brother I need that okay let's close in prayer father your word is a light and a lamp to our feet your word is what convicts and encourages us your word is what draws us to have a desire for the Lord Jesus Christ and his glory and we're thankful that it makes clear to us as believers that the walk of faith is one that is marked by a growing desire for holiness and godliness and purity and a hatred a visceral hatred for sin let that be true in us today we ask us in Jesus name amen