

Sermon Mark S. Aites

REDEFINING SIN

(Special thanks to Wendell Winkler, *Studying Sin Seriously*)

INTRODUCTION:

1. **1 Tim. 4:1-3** *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*
4:2 *Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*
4:3 *Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*
2. Sin has become an archaic word in our society today; especially evident in light of the recent scandal in Washington with our former president.
3. As you look at Scripture, sin is broken down into several concepts.
 - 1) It is referred to as *transgression*, based upon a Hebrew word which means “transgression or rebellion.”
 - 2) **Psa. 32:1** *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.*
4. Sin is also referred to as *iniquity*, based upon the Hebrew word which means *perversity*, or “twisted or crooked conduct.”
 - 1) It refers to one who does not walk a straight line or a straight course.
 - 2) Those who turn to the right or to the left are guilty of iniquity (**Deut. 5:32**).
5. Sin is also referred to as *sin*, actually means *to err or miss the mark*.
 - 1) By missing the mark it signifies that one comes short of God’s purpose for us.
 - 2) Hence it is not measuring up to the standard, and in fact carries the idea of disobedience.
 - 3) It is regarded as the “breaking of God’s law.”
 - 4) It is also referred to as *lawlessness*.
 - 5) **Psa. 51:4** *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*
6. We note then that there are several concepts involved when we speak of sin.
7. However, in our modern times, men have found ways to redefine sin.
 - 1) Homosexuality -- alternate lifestyle.
 - 2) Alcoholism -- Disease
 - 3) Gambling -- way to fund important projects.
 - 4) Euthanasia (mercy killing) -- an act of love.
 - 5) Abortion -- a woman’s right.
8. “Lust is called love, hard core pornography is tagged as art, lying is coloring the truth, dishonesty is shrewdness, car theft is joy-riding, cursing and obscenity is emphatic speech, drunkenness is alcoholism, adultery is biological maladjustment, and murder is release from a previous traumatic experience.” (Winkler)
9. “Abraham Lincoln once asked a group, ‘If you call a sheep’s tail a leg, how many legs would he have?’ They promptly answered, ‘Five.’ Lincoln responded, “Wrong, Calling it a leg doesn’t make it one.’ And whitewashing sin doesn’t change it from what it really is.” (Ibid.)
10. It is no surprise that even some religions that exist have denied the reality of sin.
 - 1) I quote from one: “The notion that both evil and good are real is a delusion...” (Ibid.)
 - 2) And to its ultimate end, comes even the denial of hell itself, where men shall be forever punished for their sins (**Matt. 25:46**).
11. A number of years ago, while doing some Bible surveys, I was intrigued at just how many people believed in Heaven, but denied the reality of hell.
12. Our society is uncomfortable with admitting to the idea of sin and yet a serious crime is

committed about every 6.5 seconds.

14. One of the prevalent problems that has emerged which has given a false impression of sin in our society is that there are no rights or wrongs; that there are no moral absolutes.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE DELUSION.

- A. **Judg. 17:6** *In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*
1. One of the popular notions shows this verse to be a modern commentary, as people are claiming that things are not as black and white as men make them out to be.
 2. They like everything to be in a gray area: and the determination as to whether or not it is right or wrong is left up to the interpretation of the individual.
- B. A number of years ago a man's wife was suffering from Alzheimer's.
1. It is a ravaging disease which devastates the mind; and in our society we are without a cure for this affliction.
 2. He watched day after day as his wife grew worse, and felt frustrated knowing that she would never be the same again.
 3. So he took his hand gun, a luger, and shot her as she lay sleeping on his couch.
 4. He reasoned that he had acted out of love in that he did not want his wife to have to suffer.
 5. He was absolutely amazed and astonished that he was arrested and convicted of murder.
 6. In his mind, he did what he thought was right; but the court obviously saw things differently.
- C. It has been a long time since that event occurred, perhaps some 20 years ago, and now we see the sentiment in our society regarding this thing as changing.
1. Dr. Kevorkian, although currently in prison, has been hailed as a hero by some of the most prominent figures in politics and in Hollywood.
 2. He believes he is doing right, just as Judges says that *every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*
- D. Let's consider for a moment what Scripture truly says about right and wrong.
1. **1 John 1:8-10** *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
10 *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*
 2. John says that to deny the reality of sin, is to *deceive yourself.*
- E. Such a deception is either out of ignorance, or a refusal to be honest with yourself.
1. Certainly at times there are things which we think which we shouldn't; things that we say that we shouldn't, and things that we should say and don't.
 2. There are things that we do which we shouldn't, and things that we should and fail to.
- F. And the tragedy is that not only do we *deceive ourselves*, but by our assertion that we don't sin, is to also make God a liar.
1. We can change the name of sin, but that doesn't change the reality of it.

2. The illustration is given that we can change “the name of poison to peppermint, but it doesn’t make it any less dangerous.” (Ibid.)
 3. To pretend that it is not there; to attempt to rename it; to outright deny it, is a mockery of God. But it is not God that lies!
 4. **Heb. 6:18** *...it is impossible for God to lie...*
 5. **1 John 1:5** *God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*
 6. **Hab. 1:13** *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...*
- G. It is troubling in our own day to realize that there are people who truly believe that they have not sinned.
1. It may well stem from man’s attempt and renaming or redefining sin.
 2. A number years ago, while on a door to door campaign during a Bible survey, a woman was asked: “Have you ever sinned?”
 3. She thought about it for a moment and said “No.” She proceeded then to explain that she had never stolen anything, or murdered anyone, or was guilty of adultery, etc.
 4. As long as she felt that she had not violated one of the 10 commandments, she had convinced herself that she had not sinned.
 5. In actuality, she was only minimizing some sins, and magnifying others; trying to convince herself that the little things which she was guilty of were not important.
- H. Some of this may stem from the thought that sin does not develop from within, but rather that it is the result of external forces.
1. For example: what I did or failed to do is the result of my upbringing.
 2. Someone will say:” I was molested as a child, and the fact that I am now molesting others is not my fault.”
 3. They reason that the sin is really not theirs, but their parents; they are just “victims” of circumstances.
 4. They say, “I never would have molested anyone, but because of my father or mother, I couldn’t help it.”
 5. And certainly this is not limited just to molesting others: child abuse is given as an excuse for a host of crimes: theft, adultery, murder, etc.
 6. Now, those external forces they say are not limited just to the parents, but can be most any relative, or neighbor, or even a teacher.
 7. Now, please don’t misunderstand me; I am not minimizing the trauma that someone has faced because of child abuse; but what I am pointing out is that it is not a valid reason to sin.
 8. And it is not a valid reason to so minimize it that we think it is no longer sin!
- I. Sometimes in this same regard, we will hear that it is the fault of improper education.
1. The statement is made: “Well he wasn’t raised to know better; and so sin is again minimized with pleas of ignorance.” (Ibid.)
 2. “He didn’t know it was wrong to steal, he didn’t know it was wrong to commit fornication,” etc. (Ibid.)
 3. But is ignorance a valid excuse?
 4. **Acts 17:30** *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*
 5. Even those not part of the Mosaic law had the blessing of the creation to know of

God, and Paul says of them, **Rom. 1:20** ...*they are without excuse.*

6. Just because we are not aware of the law does not mean that we are not guilty of a violation of that law.
 7. If you happen to be driving through an area and you assume that the speed limit is 55 mph, when in reality it is 45 mph, you are still guilty of a violation of the law.
 8. You can try to plead with the officer on the basis of ignorance; but he is well within his rights to give you a ticket.
- J. Let me add one more thought relative to the delusion regarding sin, and that is the unfortunate reality that some people have not properly trained their conscience.
1. I am convinced that the conscience is one of the most wonderful blessings ever given to us by God.
 2. If trained properly, it can help us to properly distinguish between that which is right and wrong.
 3. But we also have to accept the possibility that the conscience can be trained wrong.
 4. Jesus told the apostles, *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service (John 16:2).*
 5. The apostle Paul is probably the best example in Scripture of a man who had his conscience trained wrong.
 6. There was a time that he zealously persecuted the church, and even stated before the council at a later time: *"Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1)*
 7. In our own day, people have trained their consciences to believe that a man and a woman can live together without marriage.
 8. They have trained their consciences to believe that some people are born differently, and that if a man wants to be with a man, or a woman with a woman, then it is their right.
- K. The delusions regarding sin are many, and have so affected some religions that even practicing homosexuals are occupying their pulpits.
1. What the churches are now tolerating is far beyond what it used to be.
 2. But there cannot be a true restoration of the way God would have things to be without a realization of sin; and to see it for what it is.

II. THE DESCRIPTION.

- A. The Bible is not as gray as man would like it to be about what is considered to be sinful.
- B. Take homosexuality for instance: in condemning it, Paul writes of the ungodly of the past: **26** *For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*
1:27 *And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. (Rom. 1:26-27).*
 1. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for such carnal activity (**Gen. 19:23ff**).
 2. There is nothing gray about this sin before God.

- C. The Bible not only addresses specific sins, but also gives a catalog of sins:
1. **Rom. 1:28-32** *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 1:31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*
 2. Notice the emphasis in **vs 32** regarding these sins: *those who commit such things are worthy of death.* There is no question as to how serious these things are before God.
 3. In **1 Cor. 6:9-10** Paul gives another catalog of sins:
9 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.(cf. Gal. 5:19-21 Works of the flesh.)*
 - 1) If we have doubts about how serious God takes sin, Paul makes us aware that those guilty of these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
 - 2) And then in addressing the Christians to whom he wrote, he added: **11** *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*
- D. What is obvious, even in these lists, is that there are no gray areas relative to sin.
1. As the old saying applies, It is a matter of calling a spade a spade.
 - 1) If it is a lie, God does not call it a *little white lie*, or a misunderstanding; He calls it what it is.
 - 2) Mankind tends to reason that in certain situations it is alright to tell a lie. This is sometimes referred to as *situation ethics*.
 2. On one occasion, Abraham went down into Egypt and he told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister.
 3. Abraham reasoned: *"And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12:12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 12:13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.(Gen. 12:11-13).*
 4. Now what Abraham told was a half-truth, for Sarah was his half sister; but what he told Pharaoh was with the attempt at deception. And I tell people, a half-truth is also a half lie.
 5. It doesn't matter how we try to sugar coat it; we can call it a fib, or little white lie or anything we want to call it, but it is still a lie!
- E. The Bible not only lists catalogs of sins, but it also provides us with an understanding

that there are different types of sins. (Based on Winkler's work)

- F. There are sins which are referred to as *presumptuous* sins.
1. The actual term only appears once in our New Testament and means "bold or daring" (**2 Pet. 2:10** -- refers to those who walk according to the flesh.)
 2. As it relates to sin, it carries with it the idea of "sinning with a high hand."
 3. To sin presumptuously means that you know that what you are doing is wrong, but you are going to do it anyway.
 4. The ASV in **Num. 15:30-31** speaks of it as *despising the word of Jehovah*.
 5. In that text is the story of the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath day, despite the fact that God had forbidden such activity.
 6. A modern example would be the decision of a man and woman to live together without marriage.
 7. Or again, for those of the same sex to have a sexual relationship.
 8. Such is going boldly or daringly against the will of God.
- G. The Bible also describes for us *besetting* sins.
1. The Hebrew writer, in **Heb. 12:1**, speaks of the sins which *doth so easily beset us*.
 2. The original term means, "that which easily encircles or entangles, like a loose flowing robe."
 3. The ancient illustration, was that runners in the Olympics would lay aside even their inner garments in order to compete better.
 4. We see this in our own modern time, with people wearing as little as possible in marathons.
 5. The idea in application was not to retain anything which would cling to you.
 6. As per our discussion, it would refer to those sins which we are prone to commit.
 7. For example: those prone to drunkenness going to a place where alcohol is easily obtained; and where others are drinking it.
 8. Besetting sins covers a number of categories. Bro. Winkler gives quite a list:
 1. "Sins of habit: gambling, drinking, smoking, cursing, immorality, etc."
 2. "Sins of attitude: judging, over tolerance, covetousness, envy, jealousy, ingratitude, prejudice; insincerity."
 3. Sins of the tongue: gossip, fault-finding, criticism, cursing, jesting, slang, murmuring, lying, filthy speech, boasting, etc."
 4. "Sins of misplaced affection: money, kin, preeminence, pleasure, etc."
 5. "Sins of the flesh: gluttony, drunkenness, immorality, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, petting, revealing, etc."
 6. "Other sins: procrastination, laziness, losing your temper, stealing, worry, etc."
- H. Scripture also speaks of what is known as *secret* sins.
1. The Psalmist had a plea: a prayer if you will to God: *Cleanse me from secret faults (Psa. 19:12)*.
 2. This Psalm is attributed to David acknowledging that there are sins which we commit out of ignorance, and sins which we are guilty of which others no nothing about.
 3. This is a powerful rebuttal against those who think that as long as they don't violate the 10 commandments, they haven't sinned.
 4. There are numerous examples in Scripture of those who sinned in secret.
- I. David and Bathsheba thought that their sin of adultery unknown, but Nathan the

prophet made them well aware that God knew of their sin.

1. If you remember in the story, David had lusted after Uriah the Hittites wife, and had relations with her.
 2. When word came to David that she was with child, he arranged to have her husband killed, and then as soon as he was able, took her as his wife.
 3. The penalty for their efforts at hiding their sin was very costly: **2 Sam. 12:14**
Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.
 4. **Num. 32:23** ...*be sure your sin will find you out.*
- J. In all of these types of sins, we learn that there are sins of omission as well as commission.
- James 4:17** *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

CONCLUSION:

1. What a difference there is between the way man's look at sin today and the way that God speaks of it.
2. I wish it were not as serious as it really is, because it is the sad reality that it is sin which will keep precious souls out of Heaven.
3. Their destiny I would not wish upon anyone: **Rev. 21:8** *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*
4. People refuse to admit the reality of sin and to see the seriousness of the consequences!
5. There simply cannot be a revival in anyone's life, and a restoration of the way that God intended for man to live and worship without first admitting that there is sin in your life.
6. Friend, if you are lost in your sins I grieve for you, and know that if you don't do something about it, you are going to be lost for all eternity.
7. Do you understand the seriousness of that term *eternity* - time without end.
8. Have you been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb?
9. Plan of Salvation