

Sunday, February 13, 2022 am

## DRAWING CLOSER TO GOD (6)

### The Separation of Sin

### Isaiah 59:2

As we continue our theme of drawing closer to God, it is helpful to consider what draws us away from God. So, for the next few lessons I want to address the subject of sin and overcoming sin.

#### I. We can wander away from God

- a. Isaiah 59:2, *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.* Isaiah is writing to a fallen and condemned Israel. Likely Northern Israel is now gone, but Judah still had hope. But they were headed in the same direction and Isaiah identifies their sinful condition. While God can save those who repent (see vs. 1), they were in a state of separation from God. Isaiah is calling for repentance and restoration.
- b. As we address drawing closer to God, we must realize that we can just as easily wander away from God. We put ourselves in a situation where we have left God.
- c. Jeremiah, speaking of Judah who should have recognized and appreciated the blessings of God, said, *Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you.* (5:25)
- d. Proverbs 15:29 says, *“The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayers of the righteous”* (see 1 Peter 3:12)
- e. Hebrews 2:1-4 warns us to be alert lest we drift away. The culprit is neglecting our salvation.

#### II. What is sin?

- a. In the society we live in, sin is a challenge to define. It has nothing to do with the definition of it, but a refusal to see sin for what it really is. Far too many today want to redefine what sin is, rename various sins to make them less offensive and say that such is acceptable to God. They also mock at those who challenge their definitions, and they try to redefine the consequences of sin. BUT, all of this does NOT change what the Bible says about sin.
- b. Defined – the word in Greek means, “to miss the mark.”
  - i. Think of an archer aiming for the bullseye of a target. He misses that or the target all together. That is a good description of sin. The bullseye is God’s command (positive or negative). When we miss that there is sin.
  - ii. State simply, sin is to err in relation to the instructions of God. The idea is that God has set a standard and we are to follow that standard. To fail to follow His standard is to sin.
  - iii. 1 John 3:4 says, *“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”* The idea of lawlessness is to act without law – thus it is one breaking God’s laws.
- c. Types of sins – there are different types of sins.
  - i. Commission – this means to do that which is forbidden– this is the most obvious form of sin. Again, 1 John 3:4, defines sin as acting without law. We understand that when we do what God commands us not to do, we are sinning. For example:
    1. The very first sin was an act of commission – Genesis 2:16-17, Adam was told not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Clearly Eve knew about this (Genesis 3:2-3). But giving in to Satan’s temptations, she ate anyways – vs. 6-7.
    2. God says that we are not to lie - Ephesians 4:25 – put away lying. When we lie we are sinning. Also consider in this text, we are told HOW to speak – truth to your neighbor. When you are NOT speaking truth – you are disobeying God and thus sinning.

3. ONE thing to consider in this – God does NOT put degrees upon sins. Man has a tendency to categorize sins – some worse than others. And while true in a sense, from the standpoint of sin in God’s eyes – there is no difference. Sin is sin and must be taken care of – Romans 6:23. Consider also James 2:10 which notes that it only takes one sin to be guilty of breaking God’s law (or any law).
- ii. Omission – this means to not do that which we are commanded to do.
    1. James 4:17 tells us, to him who knows to good and does not do it, to him it is sin.
    2. There are many “good” people who live fairly moral lives – they are honest in their dealings with others, they don’t commit the immoral sins and live decent lives. BUT, there are things God commands of us, that they fail to do.
    3. They may reason that they are Christians, but they do not attend regularly (violating Hebrews 10:25, etc.), they are not “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14), they fail to include God in their decisions (James 4:17 – our text). This is just as much a sin as one who lies, cheats, steals, commits adultery, murders, etc.
    4. NOTE: Some may do SOME of what God commands, but not everything. They may “go to church” every Sunday, etc. But are there things God commands they fail to do? Again, be reminded of James 2:10 – it only takes breaking 1 law...
  - iii. Ignorance or doubt – conscience –
    1. Romans 14:23 – in considering sin, we also must think about the conscience. IF one is uncertain about if something is right or wrong. Scripture says, DON’T DO IT!
    2. To act while in doubt is to sin. That is why it is important that we train our conscience in the direction of God.
- d. Descriptions of sin – to appreciate how terrible sin is consider some of the descriptions of it.
- i. **Transgression** – a word meaning to overstep a boundary. This fits both sins of omission and commission. God’s words sets boundaries - if you choose to step over that boundary, you have transgressed. Think of trespassing – you go where you are not permitted to go. Also, think of breaking rules and becoming disqualified (e.g. sporting events - the rules must be followed or you will be disqualified. A slalom skier only has to miss one gate to be disqualified.)
  - ii. **Lawlessness** – which means to act without law. Matthew 7:23, 13:41 – in judgment those who practice lawlessness will be gathered out of His kingdom.
  - iii. **Debt** – Matthew 6:12, in the prayer of Jesus, He described sin as debt. Matthew 18:21-35 – Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving servant. The debt for sin is so high, we cannot pay it ourselves. See Romans 6:23 – the wages of sin.
  - iv. **Ungodliness** – this is one without God, one who is opposed to God. 2 Peter 3:7 speaks of judgment reserved for ungodly men. Jude 15 speaks of God’s judgment against ungodly sinners.
  - v. **Evil** – John 3:20 notes that everyone practicing evil hates the light. Romans 2:9 – tribulation and God’s wrath awaits every soul that does evil. Ephesians 5:16 speaks of evil days. Colossians 3:5 speaks of evil desires. 2 John 11 speaks of evil deeds.
  - vi. **Falling short** – Romans 3:23 – means to miss out, in this case on heaven.
  - vii. **Death** – Romans 6:23 – the ultimate result of sin is death.
  - viii. **Bondage** – to Satan – Romans 6:16, Galatians 5:1 speaks of the yoke of bondage.
  - ix. **Abomination** – that which is viewed as bad and disgusting and to be avoided – 1 Peter 4:3 speaks of abominable idolatries, Titus 1:16 speaks of those who profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, *being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.*
  - x. These and other descriptions show how God views sin and how we ought to view sin.
  - xi. IF we want to closer to God, we need to deal with these conditions.

### III. The consequences of sin

#### a. ***Separation from God*** –

- i. Death – Romans 6:23 – the wages of sin is death – another way of saying separation from God
- ii. Recall the first sin in Genesis 3. As a consequence, they died (eventually they died physically, but spiritually there was a separation immediately). Note that after the curse was pronounced, they were driven out of the garden (Genesis 3:24).
- iii. Genesis 4, after Cain murdered Abel, we read that he went out “from the presence of the LORD” (4:16)
- iv. In describing the fall of Judah – into Babylonian captivity – we read the LORD cast them out from His presence (Jeremiah 52:3).
- v. 2 Thessalonians 1:9, the ultimate punishment of the wicked will be *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*.
- vi. Ephesians 2:12 – Paul spoke of the time when they were without Christ, aliens, having no hope and without God in the world.

b. ***Sin is so terrible to God that He required drastic measures to obtain forgiveness***. Under the Law of Moses (and likely before – as we read about sacrifices beginning with Cain and Abel), God required the shedding of blood for sins. And even then it did not adequately satisfy His demands (Hebrews 10:1-4). Ultimately, He required the blood of His own Son, Jesus as a final, atoning sacrifice (Hebrews 10:5-18, and much of the New Testament).

c. ***God will not hear your prayers*** – 1 Peter 3:12, James 1:6-8, 4:3 – ask amiss...; 1 Peter 3:7 – an example of hindered prayers.

d. ***How can expect God to bless us when we refuse to obey Him?*** Matthew 7:21, 2 Thessalonians 1:8 – God in flaming fire will take vengeance on those who do not know Him and do not obey the gospel.

#### e. ***Some thoughts about sin***

- i. My sinful condition is my own fault – Ezekiel 18:20 notes that the soul that sins shall die. James 1:14-15 describes how the process of giving into temptation leads to sin and eventual spiritual death. Notice that it is “each one is drawn away by his own desires...”  
2 Samuel 12:13 – we have the example of David. He said, “I have sinned”. He did not blame anyone else or make excuses. UNTIL we face this fact, we will not change and truly repent.
- ii. Blaming others does not change this. We live in times where none want to take responsibility for their own actions. Everything is someone else’s fault, or they can’t help, or “it’s the way I was born”, etc.  
The very first sin involved, “the blame game” as both Adam and Eve passed on blame for their sins (Genesis 3:12-13). God did NOT accept that excuse then, and He will not accept it now.
- iii. Selfishness and lack of self-control are the root of all sin – self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), and a quality necessary to reach spiritual maturity (2 Peter 1:5-7).  
Being without self-control is a disposition of the selfish (2 Timothy 3:3). I am convinced that every sin we commit involves a voluntary choice to NOT control your urges.
- iv. We do what we want to do! There is so much truth to this. Deep down, when we give in sin, ANY sin, we do so because it is what we wanted to do at that moment. Rather than saying no, we gave in. Why did the rich, young ruler walk away? (Matthew 19:16-22); Why did Judas betray Jesus? (Matthew 26:14-16), Why did Esau sell his birthright? (Hebrews 12:16), Why did Cain kill his brother? (Jude 11, Genesis 4:7-8) The answer to this and every other sinner in scripture: Because he wanted to.

NOTE: I am not saying that deep down it is something you want to keep doing, but you acted by your own volition. Biblically we are taught that we are free-moral agents.

- v. There is NO sin I HAVE to commit – God did not create us without the ability to resist and overcome sin. Anytime you or I sin it is because we choose to do so. Consider 1 John 3:7-9 and 1 Corinthians 10:13, both of which tell us we can overcome whatever sins we face. This is not to say that we will not sin (cf. 1 John 1:8-10, Romans 3:23). If you live any length of time, you WILL sin. To deny it is likely a sin itself (sinful pride and lying). BUT, there is a big difference between saying we will sin and we HAVE TO sin. “Have to” means you do not have a choice. That is simply not true.
- vi. You condition of forgiveness is up to you. Just as you do not have to sin, HOW you deal with your sins is just as much your choice.
  1. A study of the history of scripture is about choice. Choose life or death – Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15 – chose who will serve...; Revelation 3:20 – He knocks for anyone to open.
  2. John 3:16 notes that whoever believes in Him will have everlasting life.
  3. Acts 2:38 was the answer to the question, “What shall we do?”. It was an action that they each took.
  4. This also applies to the wayward saint – 1 John 1:7-9. Notice how John emphasizes it is something we CHOOSE to do.

These are a few thoughts about sin. If we are to draw closer to God, we need to understand sin and what it does that relationship. And we need to understand how to deal with it so that our relationship with Him is NOT damaged. God has made possible a way for you to deal with these matters. Much of our study throughout this year will deal with this. How has sin affected your relationship with God?