

Begin at the Beginning
KSBC June 27, 2010 Sin – You Must Rule Over It! Genesis 4:7

Introduction ‘I know. I can’t. I’m sorry. Please help.’ Can you imagine the potential change in human history if that was Cain’s response recorded in Genesis 4:8? God’s gracious warning to Cain was met with a growing anger and conflict that resulted in further acts of rebellion and judgment from God. A Cain like refusal to ‘get it’ has characterized every human being since all the way to each of us in this room today. God says sin is our most profound and powerful problem. We must deal with it or die. It is powerful, deceitful and destructive. It is waiting, hiding, sizing us up, stalking and ready to pounce on you when you least expect it. Yet, we struggle as much with talking about sin in our lives as we do with achieving any kind of consistent victory over it.

Are you tired of sinning? Do you struggle with the uncomfortable reality that your sin is a bigger issue in your life today than it was before you became a Christian? When was the last time you asked yourself the question, ‘why can’t I do what is right?’ Or, ‘why do I do what I hate doing?’ Can you explain why you behave, talk and think the way you do even when your intentions are seemingly in line with God?

This morning as we celebrate the Lord’s Table by refreshing and renewing our minds around our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we must examine our lives with a view to our sin. Cain’s response to God’s gracious warning has become both our nature and response. The fundamental issue of effectively glorifying God in our lives is our battle against evil. The Lord’s Table is the place where we come to be renewed and refreshed in our battle for the glory of God, the advance of the gospel and the victory over sin through thanksgiving for Jesus Christ.

Let’s begin our celebration with a quick review . . . Genesis 4:6-7

*The LORD said to Cain,
“Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?
If you do well, will you not be accepted?
And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.
Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”*

We have learned that sin began as a rebellion against God through deceit that resulted in man being separated from God, condemned to death and dominated by the force of sin throughout successive generations. At the same time we have learned that there is a parallel force of God’s mercy and care developing that rescues people from sin and is focused on the promise of a seed through the woman.

Note the interesting, yet disturbing, appearance of this force or presence of sin appearing of all places at the celebration of the Lord’s Table . . . 1Corinthians 11:27-29

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Sin as a life disrupting force must be mastered, examined, overcome on a regular basis through the power of the gospel in Jesus Christ. Let’s examine our heads and hearts together regarding sin by considering the penalty of sin, the power of sin and the presence of sin as explained to us in Romans, specifically chapter 7.

Coming to the Lord’s Table provides a somewhat forced or expected time of reflection about your battle with sin and your dependence on Christ. Let’s track together through 3 simple questions about your sin based on the truth about sin that grows out of Genesis 3-4. We find these sin-truths fully developed in Romans 7.

Specifically our focus is on the summary expression from the Apostle as he wrestles with the conflict of his sin and responds from the depths of that struggle with a statement and corresponding question recorded in 7:24-25.

*Wretched man that I am!
Who will deliver me from this body of death?
Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

1. Sin's penalty. Sin condemns – does my sin condemn me today?

Note that God's original warning to man in the garden was that any rebellion against his ownership and rulership would result in the consequence of death (Genesis 2:17). This promise develops in the scriptures to clarification as we see man banished from the presence of God, physically dying without returning to God and ultimately becoming the objects of God's wrath.

Sin leads to death . . . the eternal separation from God bearing the just punishment for our sins with no hope of deliverance or comfort.

Romans 7:5; 6:23 sinful passions at work to bear fruit for death
Romans 1:18 the wrath of God is revealed from heaven . . .
Romans 5:1, 9 peace with God through Jesus
Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus: the way is easy, gate is wide that leads to destruction

Jesus took my death, bore my punishment and satisfied God's just wrath.

Rom. 7:4 you have died to the law through the body of Christ
Rom. 3:25 God put forward as propitiation by his blood
Rom. 5:18-21 one trespass to condemnation; one act of righteousness to justification

Thanks be to God . . . does your sin condemn you today or does Jesus blood cover you and his righteousness satisfy God's wrath on your behalf?

2. Sin's power. Sin rules – are you experiencing freedom from the reign of sin in your life today?

Note that in our study of Genesis 3-4 that the spread and influence of sin from Adam & Eve through their children and grandchildren evidenced a domination or control of sin over people. In other words, people not only sinned against God once or twice, they actually became sinners. People sin and continue to sin. God warns Cain that this is a battle that must be won. The following verses put into words truth that we know from our experience with sin in our lives.

Rom. 7:8-11 sin seizing an opportunity . . . produced in me all kinds of . . .

6:17, 20 slaves of sin 5:20-21 sin increased, sin reigned in death

The point of the truth regarding sin's power is a matter of control. The default control of your life is the power of sin which is against God and leads to your destruction. There is no neutral territory. Sin wields enormous influence over people.

Thanks be to God . . . Rom. 6:5-14 . . . know, consider, present . . . sin will have no dominion over you.

Are you alive to God in Christ Jesus . . . are you actively resisting the reign of sin by knowing Christ, thinking about his death and life for you and yielding your body and mind to him?

3. Sin's presence. Sin is alive in me – are you increasingly aware of sin in your life?

Note the argument of Romans 7:14-24 is that a growing Christian has an increasing sense of distress at his own sinfulness. That growing consciousness of sin and its consequences is a real force that drives the believer towards growing dependence on Christ.

Note the repeating themes of awareness of sins presence in Romans 7:14-24 . . .

14-17 I am sold under sin; I do not understand my actions

I do not do what I want, I do what I hate

Sin dwells within me.

18-20 Nothing good dwells in me; I do not have the ability to do right.

I do not do the good I want, the evil I do not want I keep on doing.

Sin dwells in me.

21-24 When I want to do right, evil is close, right at hand

I delight in God but see a war against that making me a prisoner

Wretched man that I am.

The Bible's exceptional people are the ones most conscious of their sin and sinfulness.

Rom. 7 points to Romans 8 for a solution to the fact that sin lives in you and is against you.

Romans 8 . . . walk according to the Spirit 1-17; coming glorification 18-30; present love of God 31-39

Are you increasingly aware of your sinfulness in a way that drives you to living in dependence on the Spirit, longing for Christ's coming and a growing reliance on God's love for you?

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Conclusion

Your confidence that Jesus will save you from your sins is connected to the truth that Jesus is saving you from your sin presently. Are you looking for a formula, an experience or avoidance to escape the struggle of sin or are you looking to Jesus as your savior, captain, model and completer of your faith?

Repent and look to Jesus! Embrace/accept that Christianity is a fight.

Strengthen yourself in the Lord. Lk. 22:31-32

Study Questions

1. Share your thoughts in response to the following questions from the sermon intro . . .

Are you tired of sinning? Do you struggle with the uncomfortable reality that your sin is a bigger issue in your life today than it was before you became a Christian? When was the last time you asked yourself the question, 'why can't I do what is right?' Or, 'why do I do what I hate doing?' Can you explain why you behave, talk and think the way you do even when your intentions are seemingly in line with God?

2. Read Romans 7:14-24. What produces the wretchedness that Paul testifies to in his life?

3. Do you think it is possible to grow in Christ without an increasing awareness of the penalty, power and presence of sin in your life? Why or why not?

4. What are the lessons to be applied to your conflict with sin from the following passages . . .

Luke 22:31-32 Revelation 3:15-17 2Corinthians 1:8-9 Matthew 5:3-4

5. What explains the prevailing experience of most Christians to believe and speak as if the greatest struggle they

have is against circumstances, trials, people, suffering and disappointments rather than the sin that dwells within them? Do you perceive defensiveness about believers in your church or group that in essence wants to hide the truth of their sinfulness?

6. How do you obey God's command of Genesis 4:7 regarding mastering sin in your life?

7. Encourage each other in Romans 8:5 by wrestling with the concept of what it means in a practical way to walk in the Spirit . . . what does the phrase 'set your mind on' imply?