

The sermon

Intro

This morning we resume our advent series: “Why Jesus Came.” Well not really. We’re in 1 Timothy. But we may as well be continuing our discussion of why Jesus came. Because we have another explicit statement of why Jesus came.

I struggle with repeating myself to you. How do I stay fresh? Well sometimes we don’t need to be fresh. Sometimes we need repetition. God has no problem repeating himself in the Bible. So I guess we shouldn’t be that troubled if the same truths keep popping.

God likes repetition. How else do we explain the Lord’s Supper? God wants us to be reminded of what he’s done. And who he is.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

Two points on how God deals with sinners. 1:17 next week.

Point 1: God saves sinners (1:15)

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. – 1:15

Pay attention. What I’m saying is really important.

sinners

Jesus came to save sinners. **Who is a sinner? What is a sinner?** We throw the word sin around every week. In case there’s any confusion, let’s be clear.

1. Every human ever born comes into world a sinner.

Jesus is the only exception.

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. – **Romans 5:19**

One man disobeyed God resulting in others being made sinners. Another man obeyed God resulting in others being made righteous.

In Romans 5, Paul drew a contrast between Adam, the first man, and Jesus Christ, the God-man. Adam disobeyed God’s command not to eat “*of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” (Gen 2:17). As a result, “*many*” were made sinners. Many meaning all people, not just some. In the same book, Paul also said:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, – **Romans 3:23**

So everyone ever born is a sinner. Adam’s one act of disobedience affected every human ever born. None of us are exempt.

But what is a sinner?

2. A sinner is someone who doesn’t believe.

As a result, their life doesn't line up with God's commands. To sin is to disobey God's law. Not keeping God's commands.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. – 1 John 3:4

A couple weeks ago we looked at a list of sins.

understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, – 1:9-10

Sinners are classified as disobedient lawbreakers. Then some specific sins are mentioned.

Sinners are people who see no value in God. No value in religion. No value in the Bible. They don't wake up in the morning thinking how can I obey God today? So they break God's law. They sin.

Sinners are unsaved people.

3. A sinner is someone who isn't born again.

Every human ever born comes into the world with a sin nature. We're born with a condition that inclines us to sin.

In Titus, Paul spoke of unbelievers in this way.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. – Titus 1:15

That's an impure mind and conscience. In other words, their inner being is corrupted, contaminated by sin.

Look at how Paul describes Christians before they were born again.

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. – Titus 3:3

That's internally corrupt and outwardly disobedient. In Romans 6, Paul speaks of believers as "enslaved to sin" prior to experiencing "newness of life" (Rom 6:4, 6).

Sinners are unsaved people who aren't indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

4. There's a sense in which believers are sinners.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. – James 4:8

James was writing to Christians here. Even as believing and born again people who are no longer enslaved to sin, remnants of the sinful nature remain. Meaning we are still sinners.

However, the New Testament overwhelmingly showers us with a positive identity: brothers and sisters in Christ, children of God, chosen, elect, justified, saints, sanctified.

Summary

So everyone's born a sinner. Sinners have a sinful nature that inclines us to break God's law. And some sinners are born again believers.

salvation

So what is salvation?

1. Salvation is the forgiveness of sins. [past]

Everyone breaks God's law because we're born into the world with a sinful nature. But some lawbreakers are forgiven. That's rescue from punishment our sins deserve.

2. Salvation is rescue from the power of sin. [present]

God giving sinners new hearts whereby we're no longer slaves to the sinful nature and we can establish new patterns in our lives. We can think and feel differently. As a result, we live differently.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' – **John 7:38**

3. Salvation is future resurrection to unending existence in the kingdom of God. [future]

A body that can't die. A soul that can't sin.

Jesus

Paul tells us Jesus came to save sinners.

Back to Romans 5:19.

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. – **Romans 5:19**

One man disobeyed God resulting in others being made sinners. Another man obeyed God resulting in others being made righteous.

Jesus is the one whose obedience will make many righteous. Meaning those who trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross will be made righteous through faith. Made righteous meaning declared righteous in God's sight. Forgiven of sin. Not guilty. Jesus' righteousness credited to our account.

Jesus died on the cross so that whoever believes would experience forgiveness of sins and have eternal life.

For those who believe, Jesus' death took away their sin. Meaning God's wrath is satisfied.

For those who persist in unbelief, their sin remains. Meaning God's wrath isn't satisfied. Rejection, exclusion, banishment to a location characterized by *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"* awaits.

For those who believe, Jesus' perfect, sinless life is credited to our account. We're treated like we lived Jesus' perfect life. We're made righteous.

Adam brought disastrous effects to all mankind. Jesus rescues all those who would ever believe.

foremost

"foremost" means Paul outranked other sinners. His sins against the church were more grievous than the average sinner. He was a bad guy. He owned his sin. He didn't minimize it.

Application: non-Christian

What does this mean for us?

Sin is a dreadful condition. Elsewhere, Paul puts it like this:

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. – Romans 8:7-8

People in the flesh (those not indwelt by the Spirit) are unable to submit to God's law. Unable to please God. That's slavery to sin.

The unbelieving father is able to do good things like provide food, shelter, clothing and help their son with their math and take them to basketball games and pay for their schooling. They love their son and sacrifice for their son.

But the unbelieving father is unable to obey and please God. Because nothing they do is done in faith. Nothing is done for God's glory. Nothing is done from love for God. They don't wake up in the morning thinking how can I honor God today?

On the other hand, the father who loves their son suffers from the sinful nature within: anger, fear, hatred, jealousy, lust, pride, rebellion (wanting to be God, doing life our own way without regard for God, wise in our own eyes) selfishness, unforgiveness, etc. If they could see the sin within, they'd see their need for Jesus. They'd know they were powerless to fix themselves.

Have you come to grips with your broken, sinful condition? Have you come to grips with all God's commands that you've failed to keep? Do you see yourself a person in need of saving?

Confess your sins and trust God's promise of forgiveness and new life in Jesus.

Application: Christian

This is how I apply this to myself.

I remind myself of past sins committed. I remind myself of who I was before Jesus. Afraid, cruel, foolish, hateful, prideful, selfish, unforgiving. A lawbreaker. Living without a hint of regard for God.

I remind myself that God rescued me from myself. From the wrath to come. God showed me mercy in Christ.

I remind myself I am still a sinner. I remind myself I still need God's forgiveness, God's strength, God's wisdom.

The Lord's prayer helps here.

Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. – Matthew 6:11-13

Whenever we pray this we remind ourselves we need God's material provision. We're reminded of our need for God's forgiveness in terms of preventing relational distance between us and God. If we've trusted Christ, Jesus took away every sin we'll ever commit. The new heavens and new earth is a done deal. It can't be taken away. But if we sin against God today, we need to ask for his forgiveness like you'd do with a spouse or friend or sibling. Frequent confession will keep our sin in check too! Blind spots will be prevented.

We're also reminded of our need to forgive others. And we're reminded that temptation and evil are lurking every which way. We need God's help to fight sin today. So we pray.

Comments

I've been thorough because it's possible to mentally agree with a truth while divorcing it from daily practice.

After salvation we remain in need of God's forgiveness and in need of God's saving power. Are you praying the Lord's prayer regularly? Do you know what you're asking for?

Point 2: God is exceptionally patient with sinners (1:16)

But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. – 1:16

Paul's life is an example, a living illustration of how God deals with sinners. Christian, Paul's life is a living illustration of how God deals with us.

God's mercy on Paul wasn't random. It was purposeful. God wanted to display his attributes. To us: *"those who were to believe in him for eternal life."* God wanted us to see something in his dealings with Paul.

Paul invaded Christian homes and snatched men and women, taking them to prison. Then tortured them to get them to deny Christ. And even voted in favor of the death penalty for those who persisted in faith.

Could God have wiped out Paul? Yes. Could Jesus could have appeared to Paul sooner? Yes. Could all the Christian suffering be avoided? Yes. But God didn't act that way. Because God wanted us to see is *"his perfect patience."* Meaning God bore with Paul. God restrained himself while Paul attacked the church. Then he showered Paul with grace.

In part for our benefit. That we would see the nature of God: patient with us, bearing with us, restraining his wrath.

Problem of evil

We briefly touched on what's called the problem of evil last Sunday school class. The idea that the evil and suffering present in the world today proves that either God is not all-powerful or that God is not all-loving. In simple terms, If God's in control, why is there so much suffering in the world? How can a God who created a world with so much suffering be good?

God could have created heaven from the outset. No fall. No sin. No death. Just paradise from the very beginning for all. Why not? I believe 1:16 provides one answer.

Because God wanted to show his attributes. God wanted to display his perfect patience. Not to mention his mercy. So we have the fall. No fall means no opportunity to display his perfect patience.

Maybe you have something you treasure in your home that you want everyone to see when they enter the house. A painting, family photos, a Bible plaque, etc. You have something you want to put on display. Something you want others to see. God wants you to see his perfect patience.

So we have the fall. Without the fall we wouldn't see God's mercy or patience or forgiveness or comfort or holiness or wrath or sorrow over sin. There'd be no cross. There'd be no suffering Savior. So we have the fall.

That's not the only answer. But it's one answer. I would add humans are always responsible for their sin. Scripture never blames God for our sin. I'll put it like this. If everyone feared and obeyed God and did what he says we wouldn't have wars or theft or cruel words. Man is always to blame when man inflicts suffering on man.

Another thought is God's more angry about sin than us. So he punishes sinners. So he sent Jesus to die for our sins. God's more saddened by sin than us. So he comforts all sufferers who turn to him. God loves perfectly. God chooses perfectly. God angers perfectly. God grieves perfectly.

And God's more merciful than us. Is God more patient than you are with people? Is God more forgiving than you are?

One of you asked me, why all of this? Why all the struggling with our sin and our own hearts? Why not straight to heaven after believing? Because God is pleased to save sinners. Including rescuing us from sinful attitudes and sinful patterns.

God wanted a world where sinners would be transformed before arriving at their heavenly destination. God saw fit to create our world as is to display his salvation, the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Paul being a foremost example. The man who strived to wipe out the church, becomes the man who makes Christ known and establishes local churches. God loves to display his salvation of sinners.

Application

This is how I apply this to myself.

When I consider God's patience with Paul, I'm reminded of God's patience with me. I see myself as a learner. A person in whom ignorance still remains. One who's in the process of becoming more pleasing to God. That means I'm not wholly pleasing to God. There's room for improvement. There's evil and temptations to resist. There's attitudes that remain in need of reformation.

Knowing God is still patient with me fosters humility. I haven't arrived. There's lessons I haven't learned yet. The same with you. God's patience says there's room for spiritual growth in our lives. There's work to do. Meaning no room for spiritual complacency, apathy, etc.

When I consider how God transformed Paul, I'm reminded of God's interest in transforming me. And his power to do so. God's work in the apostle Paul says there's hope for me. And hope for you. We can see with new eyes.

PRAYER