

# God's Sovereignty and Your Salvation, Part 2

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May 13, 2007

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 10, where we're going to be continuing on in verses 21–24.

When I was growing up in the mountains of Idaho, there was a man [named Bob] who lived up the dirt road about a half-mile. He and his wife lived in a cabin up there. He was a surveyor—a very strong, Marlboro-type guy. [He] loved hunting and hiking. He was in his fifties. He started having problems with one of his eyes, and went to the doctor, and [the doctor] said, “Oh, your retina is coming detached,” so he did an operation and it fixed it for a while, and then it got worse. He ended up having, I think, three or four operations. The doctor couldn't figure out why this was happening. He said, “There's something wrong here. I don't know what's going on, but this isn't working.” And so, he did a bunch of tests, and he found out that [Bob] was full of cancer. So much so, that [the doctor] just said, “It's over,” and six weeks later, [Bob] was gone. [The doctor] tried for about two years to fix [Bob's] eye, but that was just a symptom of the bigger problem.

This is how it is with most people today. They have problems—anger problems, lust problems, lack of self-control, anxiety, worry, you name it. A lot of times they go to doctors and they get some medicine from psychiatrists or whatever to try and fix them, but [they're just treating] the

symptom. They don't even understand what the real problem is. They don't understand that they are saturated, marinated, waterlogged in iniquity. They don't even realize it. There is only one cure for something like that, and it doesn't come from a pharmacy, and it doesn't come from self-help books, or trying to distract yourself with hobbies, or work, or whatever. It's Jesus Christ: He is the only one who can cure you of your fatal disease called sin. It is through repentance and faith in Christ alone that sinners, who are on their way to hell, and who are totally corrupted by sin, can actually be freed from sin and its consequences.

This morning we [are] return[ing] to Luke 10. If you were here about three weeks ago, we started a series [called] "The Sovereignty of God and Salvation," based on this text. Jesus has sent out the seventy disciples, they have been empowered to do miracles and given authority to preach the gospel. Jesus has sent them out to all the cities where He Himself was going to [later] go so that they would do some pre-evangelism there. Then Jesus would come and do the second-tier shot at [the people in the cities] with the gospel. Well, [the seventy have] all gone out and they've come back. When they came back, they were really excited. They were not excited that people repented of their sins, or gave their lives to Christ and believed in the name of Jesus, but what they were excited about is that the demons were subject to them. Jesus, then, gives them a mild rebuke, and says, "Listen, don't be excited that the demons are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. That is the huge deal" [see Luke 10:20]. Then, Jesus gets in the let-me-show-you-what-I-mean mode, and He Himself begins to praise the Father.

There's an issue here [that is] common with a lot of people who call themselves Christians. A lot of Christians have no joy over their salvation. Why is that? Being saved to them, being a Christian, is like having a couch at home. "I've got a couch," [or], "Yeah, I've got a refrigerator." That's about it. "Yeah, that happened to me a while back." There's no joy, there's no excitement, there's no thrill. When trials come, all they can think about is their trial and how bad it is, and how much they're hurting, and [they] pray

to God that He would make it go away. They don't have this continual joy in their lives that God has saved them, though they are unworthy [and] they do not deserve it. There is something wrong. A lot of Christians have a very ho-hum attitude about their salvation, and this is what Jesus is driving at here: "Man, rejoice that your names are written in heaven, that they're recorded in heaven in the book of life." That is our greatest reason for rejoicing.

Follow along in Luke 10:21–24 as Jesus model[s] to the disciples what He is talking about. [It] says:

At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

This is an amazing text. This is *good*. Jesus rejoices for two reasons. The first reason He rejoices is that the Father intentionally hides the truth from those Jesus describes as "the wise and intelligent" so [that] they cannot be saved. Jesus is praising God for that. Think about that. What if that's your husband, or your wife, or your son, or your daughter, or a close friend, or a coworker? Think about that.

[In] *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan speaks of Christian fleeing from the City of Destruction because he meets up with a man named Evangelist, who helps him understand this book [Christian] has been reading. [Christian] falls into the Slough of Despond, and he's got this huge burden on

his back that is fixed there and he can't get it off. He almost drowns, and if Help hadn't come along and pulled him out, and gotten him on the way again to the Narrow Gate [also known as the Wicket Gate] across the field, [Christian] would have surely drowned. As he's working his way across the field, bee-lining it toward the Narrow Gate, which everybody must enter if they're to get on the way to Heaven, [Christian] meets up with one Mr. Worldly Wiseman from the town of Carnal Policy. Mr. Worldly Wiseman sees [Christian] and begins to engage him in conversation, ask[ing] him where he's going. [Christian] says, "Oh, I am in trouble. I have this great burden on my back. I am leaving the City of Destruction and I'm going into the Narrow Gate. This is where Evangelist told me to go."

Worldly Wiseman says, "Oh, that's too bad. Evangelist is a good man, but he doesn't give very good advice." He says, "Listen, if you want that burden off your back, all you need to do is go to the nearby town of Morality. There you will find one Mr. Legality, or his son, Civility, and either of them, they can take that burden off."

Christian doesn't know very much, he's just new on the way, so he says, "OK." Pretty soon, he's on this very treacherous cliff with his great burden, he gets to the end of it, and there's nothing but the pit of hell before him.

In the providence of God, Evangelist shows up to give [Christian] a rebuke, and says, "What are you doing *here*?" And so, he gets [Christian] back on the right way.

The world is full of worldly wisemen and –women who think they're good enough to get to heaven on their own, that their deeds are going to get [them] there on their own, that they're better than most people, and so they [will] get to heaven. Or, when put on the balances, their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, and so they get to go to heaven. Or, they've never committed the really bad things, and so they get to go to heaven. Whatever it may be, whether it is a false religion, denial, self-righteousness, [or] works salvation of some sort, the fact is [that] that way leads to hell and only to hell. In our text, Jesus rejoices that the Father purposely hides truth from people like this.

Second, toward the end of [Luke 10:]21, if you look there, Jesus rejoices that the Father has revealed the truths of the gospel to infants. We learned [previously] that He's not talking about literal babies here, [but] He's talking about those who, like children, are totally dependent on God for their salvation. [They] realize they cannot save themselves, they are hopeless, they are helpless, and without God they *cannot* deliver themselves from the consequences of their own sin. The Father is well pleased, Jesus says. Look at verse 21: "Yes, Father, for this way," that is, this revealing of truth to infants, "was well-pleasing in Your sight," in addition to hiding it from the wise and intelligent. That's what Jesus is rejoicing at. He's rejoicing that God the Father plays this part of revealing and hiding truth.

Then in [Luke 10:]22, look there, Jesus says, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father." We know that Jesus certainly has been given all things, but specifically, in this context, it's talking about Him receiving from the Father those [to whom] the Father has chosen to reveal the truth. What's interesting is how the Father chooses to reveal the truth to them. If you look down, in the middle of verse 22, Jesus says, "And no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." We know that Jesus only did the will of whom? The Father. Sounds pretty exclusive, doesn't it? The text almost sounds like God is sovereign in salvation.

Jesus concludes in [Luke 10:]23 by telling the seventy that they have seen and heard things that kings and prophets longed to see and hear. They get to see Jesus, God incarnate, the Messiah in flesh, and hear Him teach, and watch Him live, and experience salvation through faith in Him—something that the prophets and kings of the past only wished they could have encountered. Jesus, in John 14[:9], said to Philip, "If you have seen Me, you've seen" whom? The Father. They got to see the character of the Father, the will of the Father, lived out in Jesus.

Jesus makes some incredible statements here, with some incredible implications, doesn't He? There are people out there, Jesus says, "the wise and intelligent," who are kept from the truth. There are people out there,

the infants, the hopeless, the helpless, who get the truth revealed to them. It is obvious that no one has the ability, the power, the resources within themselves to get at the truth they need in order to be saved. It is either granted or withheld by divine decree.

That can kind of unsettle you. [It might make you wonder:] Why pray? Why send missionaries out? If God is so in control, if He's so sovereign, if He's so over everything, then why even bother? These are good questions, aren't they? That's why we're looking at this, because a lot of people look at this and they just don't know how to handle it.

Obviously, our text is talking about the salvation of men. Jesus, the Son of Man, has come to save men. He has saved some, these seventy, and sent these men out to preach to other men so that they might be saved, and they might go tell other men about the saving truth of the gospel. We've already learned that men were created on the sixth day of creation. God created mankind in His image, and the image of God consists of two basic things: [First], characteristics and attributes [that] God has that men have to some degree. Of course, [these characteristics and attributes] are very corrupted [in men because of] the Fall.

Second, men have a role that is similar to [God's]. Just as God rules over heaven and earth, so He created man, put him on the earth, and [said], "Rule over, subdue, the earth and all of its creatures" [see Genesis 1:28]. Of course, when men submitted to Satan, they lost their dominion; they lost their righteousness.

We've learned that people have both physical attributes and spiritual attributes. God has created men in a composite entity of both spiritual things and physical things [that] stay together until you die, and then they're separated until the Resurrection, and then they're reunited again. That's what man is.

What if someone was to come up to you, and [that person] was to say, "You are so evil and wicked." How would you respond to that?

"No, sir!" See, I think a lot of people would be very quick to defend themselves against such accusations. Why? There's only one reason why,

and it's because they see themselves as holy, righteous, and good. So, let me ask you: Are you wicked and evil, or not? Will you deny that you're a sinner?

Somebody says, "Well, I'm a sinner, but I'm not evil and wicked."

"Oh, so you're a *holy* sinner. You have this special kind of sin [that] is good, and holy, and just." It's kind of strange, isn't it?

"I'm not evil and wicked, I'm just a sinner." Hmm. Most Christians will admit they're sinners, but refuse to admit they're wicked and evil.

Someone says, "Yeah, I sinned. When I was saved, though, I became a saint. I became a holy one."

"Oh, so you quit sinning?"

"Well, no."

"So, then, you're wicked and evil."

"Well, no."

"Well, then, what are you?"

To understand the sovereignty of God in salvation, you have to start at the base of the mountain. The sovereignty of God in salvation is the pinnacle of all doctrines, but you have to start at the base before you get to the peak, and at the base is the doctrine of man and sin. This is why we're going into this. We've looked at man, now we're going to start getting into sin. There are six issues related to the sin of mankind that I want to cover. We're going to look at two this morning. You can't get to the peak unless you start at this level.

Now, if you're thinking to yourself, "Jack, are you going to be preaching from this passage?" Well, not really. I'm just going to preach from the *implications* of the passage. I explained this before. In the almost seven years I've been here, we've never really gone through this doctrine clearly, and so we're going to do it because this is such an important thing. [The] world has totally lost touch with reality when it comes to what [it is] and what [its] problem is. [It is] trying to get [its] eye fixed when [it has] a lot bigger problem.

So, first, we need to know what sin is. What is sin anyway? It used to be that people were taught the Bible in public schools. You'd go to public school, you would be taught the Bible, [and] you would know what sin is. But now, it's against the law to teach the Bible in public schools, and most people have become biblically illiterate. Most *churches* don't even teach the Bible, which is a strange thing. Don't think, if you've been coming here for a long time, that this is how it is everywhere. It's not. [In] most churches, there's a verse read, and then the preacher says what he wants from *Reader's Digest* or the paper. People have lost touch with a knowledge of sin. [If] you come up to the average person and talk about sin, what's going on in his mind [are things like] murder, [or] running a plane into a skyscraper, [or] some big sort of capital crime—the seven deadly sins. Listen, there are a lot more than seven, [and] every sin, [of any degree or kind] is deadly.

The world is ignorant of its disease. Why is that? It's because they're ignorant of God and His Word. When you don't understand the Word of God, you don't have a knowledge of sin. Since the world is doing everything it can to get the Scriptures and the knowledge of God out of the public, and out of the schools, and out of everything they can, people, then, are growing less clued-in about their problem, which is their sin. Paul says, in Romans 4:15: "For the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation." If you don't understand the law, how do you know [whether] you're violating it or not? If there's no law, there's no violation. We've gotten rid of the law of God in our society, and with it the knowledge of sin. We need to see how God defines sin.

I'm going to be all over the place [in the Bible, so] you might want to just listen if you're too slow to keep up. (Some people are going, "Oh, yeah?" [with their Bibles poised and at the ready].) OK, well, see if you can keep up. [In] Daniel 9:11, Daniel is praying, he's confessing his sins and the sins of Israel, and this is what he says. Listen to how he defines sin here:

Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

There are tons of words in both the Old and New Testaments that talk about sin or are synonyms for sin, but [in this verse] we have “transgressed your law,” “turned aside,” “not obeying Your voice.” That’s what sin is: when God says, “This is right and this is wrong. Do this and don’t do that,” and we do what we shouldn’t and don’t do what we should [see Romans 7:19–20]. In 1 John 3:4, John, speaking about love and how it is antithetical to sin, says this: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” Sin is lawlessness. So, that’s what sin is: to break the law. We’ve all been there. You [drive] up to a stop sign, you see somebody else approaching from a different angle, and just as you’re stopping, they just slow down a little bit and roll through. They have broken the law. They have acted in a lawless way. Now, is it because they don’t know what the law is? No, they know what the law is—there’s a huge sign that says, “Stop!” What is it, [then]? What’s the problem? They don’t want to submit to the law. They don’t want to place themselves under the authority of the law, and so, they act lawlessly. That’s sin.

This is why John says in 1 John 2:16 that all sin has its roots in “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.” We want the pleasure of our sin so badly we’re willing to sin against Almighty God to get it. We make ourselves god; we make our own laws, our own rules; and we govern our own selves. This is why sin in the Scriptures is equated with idolatry. Idol worship isn’t just about hunkering down in front of some carved wood thing, lighting some incense, and bowing down to it. Listen to what Paul says in Colossians 3:5. He lists these different sins and then [note] what he says at the end: “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.” Why? [It is] because every time we

sin, what we're doing is we're saying, "God, I don't want you ruling over my life. I am going to be my own god, for my own purposes, and my own glory. I am going to set You aside, and do what I want to do," which, plain and simple, is an act of idolatry.

In 1 John 5:17, John gives us another definition of sin, when he says: "All unrighteousness is sin." Now, what is "unrighteousness"? [It is] not doing right. How do we know what is right? [We know] by the Word of God. We're back to it again, right? [To] sin is to transgress the Word of God.

Sometimes, if you've been a Christian a long time, or [have] grown up in a Christian home, you may just marvel when somebody says, "I'm not a sinner."

Your jaw just kind of just hangs down and hits the ground. You pick it up, snap it back in place, [and say], "What?"

"I'm a good person."

"Really? You just lied. You just sinned."

In his mind, [that person] is pretty decent because he "never committed adultery, murdered anybody, or robbed a bank."

James, in James 2:10–11, right after discussing the sin of partiality, says this:

For whoever keeps the *whole law* and yet stumbles in *one point*, he has become guilty of *all*. For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. [emphasis added]

I think it's interesting that he puts those two sins—murder and adultery—up there, because those are the two sins that sinners who think they're righteous often say they don't commit and [that] that's what makes them righteous. It's like it happened by chance. God knows where men are. Do you see what [James is] saying there? [He] is saying [that] the law of

God is composite. It is a composite entity—a single unit made of many laws—and [if] you break one law, you've broken the unit. [If] you chip a plate, the plate is chipped. How many chips do you need in a plate to have a chipped plate? It's broken. Let's just say you were able to perfectly mend that broken spot, [but then] you chipped it in another spot. Now what? It's a chipped plate. [If] you sin, you break the law of God. You are a transgressor of the law. You are lawless. That's what James is saying. It's over. [If] you're sitting at home, you're reading your Bible, [and] some wicked thought comes into your mind, you've sinned. You've broken the whole law. "You've got to be kidding me!" No, I'm not kidding you. "The whole thing?" The whole thing. You're guilty. "How can that be?" All sin is bad. It's all evil. It's all wicked.

[You may be] sitting out there, and you're thinking to yourself, "Yes, yes, I know I commit these 'mistakes,' these 'deeds,' these 'thoughts,' but this is common. These are just things that are common to all mankind. It's natural. You can't avoid this. That doesn't make me evil and wicked." OK, let's just talk about this. God says, "You shall worship and serve God only" [see Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8]. Have you ever in your life given to someone else, or yourself, that which belonged to God—time, energy, resources? I know the answer. It's "yes." [That's] idolatry. [I don't mean you] made a graven image, and worshipped it, and bowed down to it, [but] have you ever served a thing—a car, a hobby, a house, a TV, whatever it is? Have you ever given to anything that which belongs to God in any degree? [You're an] idolater. Have you ever taken the Lord's name in vain, maybe used "God" or "Jesus" as an expletive, or a filler word, or just used it irreverently at any time, even once? You're guilty.

How about the Sabbath? "Well," you say, "the Sabbath. Paul tells us [that] we aren't to let anyone judge us in regard to a festival, new moon, or Sabbath [see Colossians 2:16], that one man regards one day above another, another man regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind [see Romans 14:5]." OK. OK, he says that. You're right. But is there a principle there? That maybe we should be spending time every

week to rest and worship God? Has a week ever gone by when you didn't do that? You are guilty. How about honoring your father and mother—this *is* Mother's Day. Ever not done that? Just ask your mom. You are guilty.

“Oh, but,” you say, “I haven't committed murder. I'm good on that one.” Jesus says, in Matthew 5:21–22, that everyone who is angry with his brother has committed murder in his heart. Think about *that*. Why does He say that? [It is] because the seed sin that leads to murder is anger and hatred toward one's brother. Every murder that has ever been committed starts there, and that sin then grows to become the full-blown act. If you're angry with somebody, Jesus says you're guilty before the court as a murderer [see Matthew 5:22]. Have you ever been angry with anybody? Sure you have. You are a murderer.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery” [see Exodus 20:14, KJV]. “Oh, but I've never done that one.” What does Jesus say? Any man who looks at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery in his heart [see Matthew 5:28]. Just as anger and hatred are the seed sins that lead to murder, so lust is the seed sin that leads to adultery. [It is the] same sin, just [to a] smaller degree. You're an adulterer.

“You shall not steal” [see Exodus 20:13]. [Have you] ever stolen anything, even a small thing—a paperclip, a pencil? [Have you] ever not given to the Lord when you knew you should have, and stolen from God? Have you ever cheated on your income tax, had the cashier give you a little bit too much change, and you kind of rejoice that she gave you more than you deserved and you didn't tell her, and you stole from her [and] that company? You're a thief. You're guilty.

“You shall not bear false witness” [see Exodus 20:16]. [Have you] ever told a bold-faced lie? [Have you] ever just slightly twisted the truth, altered things a little bit, maybe changed the facts some [small] degree? [You're a ] deceiver, liar, guilty.

[Have you] ever coveted anything that someone else has? A wife, a possession, a car—a Bugatti Veyron? Hmm. You're guilty!

“Oh, Pastor Jack, bless your soul! I think you’ve overlooked one thing. We’re not under the law, but [under] grace. You’re quoting us the heart of the Law of Moses. Paul makes it clear we are not under the Law of Moses, but under grace.” OK, you’re right. You caught me. So let’s just put you under the law of Christ, which the New Testament says you’re under [see Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2]. Let me ask you this: How many of you every moment of every day are worshipping the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength [see Mark 12:30]? [Is] anybody squeaky clean there? How about this? “Love your neighbor as yourself” all the time [see Matthew 19:19]. Guilty, guilty, guilty. We’re *all* guilty. You [think you’re] going to hide behind the law of Christ, the royal law, the law of liberty, [but] it’s just as scary [as the Law of Moses].

You need to realize that you are guilty before God as a sinner unless you’re saved. (We’re getting there.) Everybody is born a sinner and sins because they’re a sinner. We are just saturated in it, and a lot of people don’t even realize it. [Do] you know what? That is why they don’t rejoice over their salvation—because they’ve missed it.

Now, before we get into the really scary stuff (we’re just getting into it), we need to ask ourselves: Where did sin come from, anyway? This is all convicting, so we’re just going to leave the convicting stuff for a minute and talk about where sin came from. Think about that. Look back at Genesis 1:31. In Genesis 1:31, it’s the sixth day after God creates everything, and we read: “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” Think about this. At the end of the sixth day, after He created everything, God says, “It is *very* good.” There is no sin. Then [Genesis] 2 is nothing more than a detailed explanation of the sixth day. So, really, the end of [Genesis] 2 is the same place [as] the end of [Genesis] 1—the end of the sixth day.

Something happened in between the white spaces of the end of [Genesis] 2 and the beginning of [Genesis] 3, when we read in [verse 1]: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall

not eat from any tree of the garden”?)” Now there is evil in the good creation. This is where sin came from. Somewhere after creation, when God created the heavens and the earth and all they contain, there was rebellion in heaven, and Satan convinced a third of the holy angels to rebel with him against God. That is where sin entered into creation. It was from that point that Satan, then, out of malice, out of hate, [and to try and get back at God], went down to deceive Adam and Eve, who were innocent.

Jesus, speaking of this in John 8:44, says this, speaking to the religious leaders: “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father”—they were trying to kill Jesus. “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” Jesus’ whole point is this: the devil has been a murderer from the beginning, and when He says “beginning,” He [means] “In the beginning” [Genesis 1:1] of creation. Why does He say that? Well, it’s not because Satan, with his own being, killed Adam and Eve, but he was the instrument by which that temptation came, which deceived Eve and killed her, and made Adam sin willfully and killed him. [Satan] was the instigator of the rebellion of Adam and Eve. And so, he is described as a “murderer from the beginning.”

John says something similar in 1 John 3:8, where he says: “The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” Again, in both of these texts, Satan is described as a murderer and sinner “from the beginning.” That is, from the beginning of creation—that’s the origin of sin. That’s where sin came from, when Satan, though created perfect, willingly rebelled against God.

You might think to yourself, “Well, then, if that’s the case, then it’s not Eve’s fault. She was deceived.” Well, no. In 1 Timothy 2:13–14, when Paul is speaking of the role of women in public worship, and why they are to fulfill their God-given role, he says this: “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman

being deceived, fell into transgression.” “Transgression” is “willful rebellion against God.” How about Adam? Hosea comments on Adam, comparing Adam to Israel. Hosea, speaking of wayward Israel, says: “But like Adam, they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me” (Hosea 6:7). So, God [viewed Adam’s sin as] Adam [dealing] treacherously against God, and [transgressing] against God—the same word that Paul uses of Eve. So Satan is not responsible for actually causing them to sin, but [was] the agent by which they were tempted to sin.

But it’s worse than that because once Adam and Eve sinned, they then became sinners and were cursed because of their sin. Now, we have Mrs. Sin and Mr. Sin, who then have children, who are children of sin. They’re conceived in sin, born in sin, and then sin because they’re sinners. Paul says, in Romans 5:12: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” This is what is called the “imputation,” or the “reckoning” of Adam’s sin to mankind. It’s just the way it is. If you have parents who are dogs, you’re a dog. It’s just the way it is. If your parents are cats, you’re a cat. If your parents are sinners, you’re a sinner.

Now, you may be wondering, “If Satan seems responsible for Adam and Eve’s sin, or he led them, or tempted them, and Eve was deceived, and she did it because of that, certainly we can’t be guilty because of that.” Oh, yes, we can. Yes, we can. You can’t just blame Satan for *your* rebellion. You can’t blame Adam or Eve for your rebellion. This is called “blame shifting.”

Look at Genesis 3:11. Blame shifting is nothing new. God asks Adam a simple question after He finds him cowering [in his] fig-leaf garment in the bushes: “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” [It’s a] simple “yes” or “no” question. Do you remember how Adam responded? Look at the text, [where] he said: “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” Let me just read this really slowly again, and I want you to see who Adam blamed: “The woman whom *You* gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and

I ate.” Who did Adam blame? God. Amazing, isn’t it? Here’s God, He’s perfectly holy, He’s transcendent. He created them perfect, He put them in a perfect environment, [and] He gave them one rule.

Adam isn’t even deceived, he just willfully rebels, and when God says, “What’s this you have done?” [Adam] says, “It’s Your fault. That woman You gave me, she gave me some bad fruit.”

What is amazing, [is that when] God turns to Eve, look at the text, [and says]: “What is this you have done?” notice what Eve says: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Was it true that the serpent deceived her? Yeah, sure, and then she ate, right? Right. But let’s look at the question again: “What is this *you* have done?” Not “what is this that *Satan* did?” God wasn’t talking to Satan; He was talking to Eve. He wanted to know what *Eve* had done, not what Satan did.

So, Adam says, “It’s Your fault. You gave me the bad woman who gave me the bad fruit.”

[God] turns to the woman, [and says], “What is this?”

[The woman says], “It was the serpent. He did it.”

This is blame shifting. People are good at it, and it comes naturally [to them]: “I can’t help it, I grew up in a non-Christian home.”

“My parents weren’t Christians.”

“My dad left home when I was little. He was an alcoholic.”

“I grew up in a bad neighborhood.”

“My brothers and sisters taught me to sin.”

“It was the wife You gave me. It was the mother-in-law.”

[If] a kid goes on some shooting rampage or somebody goes postal and shoots a bunch of people, and [people ask] what’s wrong, [the response is:] “Well, you know, it’s the psychiatrist’s fault because he didn’t have [the person’s] medications adjusted [properly].” [Or], “It was because of those violent video games that they were compelled to play, and compelled to act out, and go buy a gun, and sneak, and plan, and then go on this shooting rampage. Obviously, they’re not responsible for their actions.” Oh, yes, they are.

Turn to James 1. In this section, James is talking about trials that are coming upon the believer in verse 2 all the way down through verse 13. He's talking about trials, [and] he's talking about how [when] those trials come upon us there is this great temptation that happens, especially if we respond in an ungodly way, [such as]: "Well, I can't help it because" what? You blame somebody else. "Well, you don't know what I'm going through. You don't live in my house. You don't have four teenagers at home," or whatever it is. "You don't know my boss." [It is] blame shifting.

James brings [his readers] to the place where they realize, "Listen, what you're really doing is you're blaming God." He says, in verse 13: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'"—don't go blame shifting. [Then] he says in verse 14: "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." And, he says, "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" [James 1:15]. Notice several things here. You are tempted and enticed because of your own sinful lusts. Have you ever been tempted to drop a bowling ball [on] your foot? Have you ever been tempted to slam your hand in the car door? Or maybe to turn on the burner, and [thrust] your hand in the flames there for a while and just let it cook? Why not? Why doesn't that tempt you? [It is] because it doesn't bring you any pleasure, it doesn't bring you any gain, and so it's not tempting to you. What does tempt you? Things that bring you pleasure, satisfaction, pump up your pride, your ego—"the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" [1 John 2:16]. That's what tempts us.

You can't just blame other people and other things for your sins. James says, "Each one is tempted... and enticed by his own" desires, "his own lust." Notice also the progression here. Your lust breaks the barrier of your heart, erodes your self-control, you start fantasizing and imagining what this sin would be like, and then you commit it. It all starts in the heart. [Did] you ever wonder why we are told in Proverbs 4:23, to "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." Do you

ever wonder why that is? It's because your heart is the control center of your whole being.

If you're trying to stop sinning by controlling your outward behavior, man, you're just mowing the top of the blades off. You have to dig it out by the roots, and the roots are in your heart. If you don't deal with sin at the heart level, you'll never have victory over it. It will dominate you forever. It's all about what's in the heart. Then, when it starts losing its control, when it starts caving in to the imaginations, then it's only a matter of time before things are acted out in the deed. Eve's first sin was not eating the fruit. Eve's first sin was lusting after the fruit. It was that lust in her heart [that] then gave birth to the action of eating. Notice, also, at the end of [James 1:]15, that when we sin, when sin is accomplished, [the] bottom line [is that] it brings forth death, which means [that] it's always your fault and you have to pay the consequences for it. No one ever makes you sin.

We all know that verse, it's a very encouraging verse, that's in 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul is talking about how we, as believers, need to look into the Old Testament, see the examples of those who have fallen into sin, and then we need to learn from their sin what we're not to do. He says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also" [1 Corinthians 10:13]. Let me ask you this: If that verse is true, then who is responsible for your sin? You are. You see, if you couldn't help but sin, then God wouldn't be able to help you escape. But you can escape, if you're a believer, and so you are responsible. It wasn't the devil who made you do it, like Flip Wilson taught a long time ago. It wasn't your wife, or your brother, or your boss, it wasn't the times we live in, it was you and it was only you, and it's always you. You're the one who sins. That makes you a guilty sinner.

We have a lot more to cover, but we're almost out of time. Let me just give you two things [to think about] here. First: If you are a believer, if you know you are saved, born again, your life has been changed and you have no doubt of that, you see the fruit of it and you're pursuing righteousness,

you need to look at your life and you need to [ask], “Do [I] rejoice in [my] salvation?” I tell you this: you can be sure that people who don’t rejoice in their salvation do not meditate on their sin. You need to meditate on your sin, [on] just how sinful you are, how frequently you go astray in thought and in deed, how much you’ve sinned in the past, how much you sin in the present, how frequently your deeds fall short of the glory of God.

I am telling you, if you meditate on [all of those things, they] will make salvation that much sweeter. It will magnify the grace of God, it will show you how kind God has been to you, because you were saved and you didn’t deserve it. Salvation is by grace—it is undeserved, unearned mercy [by which] you’re saved. It’s the love of God, which you didn’t deserve. God saves you by these things. Why? [It is] because you’re a rebel. You’re an evil, rotten sinner. We all are. But the great thing is that [those are] the only kind of people Jesus came to save. You may think to yourself, “Oh, Jack, that sounds depressing. Do I have to [meditate on my sin]?” Yes! Dwell on it, think about it when you’re praying to God and it will just bubble up in you praise and thankfulness.

When you are saved by some incredible act, [when] somebody delivers you from this incredible catastrophe, you are thankful. When you’re hanging from some precipice and somebody barely saves you before you plunge to your death, it’s like, “Oh, thank you, thank you!” Why? [It is] because you saw the peril, you saw the danger, and that makes you that much more thankful. Remember what Jesus said? “The one who is forgiven much, loves much” [see Luke 7:47]. [Do] you want to love God much? Think about your sin. Oh, do it. Think about how sinful you are, and you will love God for saving you.

[Second: Some of] you don’t know Christ. Maybe you just call yourself a Christian, maybe you come to church, you don’t read your Bible, you don’t pray, you don’t really love the Lord, [but] you’re afraid of going to hell, and you think, “I’m just going to show up [at] church, and hopefully, maybe someday, this is going to help me.” Well, today is the day that it’s going to help you. You need to give your life to Christ. What are you waiting

for? What sin is there in your life that's so wonderful [that] you're willing to gamble your eternal soul on it, eternity on it? Do you really think that whatever sin that's keeping you from God is bringing you so much pleasure that knowing the God of the universe, having the free gift of eternal life, and every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places [see Ephesians 1:3] for ever and eternity is actually going to be less than what you're experiencing now?

Think about that. It's amazing to ponder what God is offering you: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" [Matthew 11:28]. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" [John 1:12]. Think about that. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you *will be saved*" [Romans 10:9, emphasis added]. This is what you need to do because we're all sinners, and we're all guilty, and there's only one way to escape, there's only one cure, and that's Jesus, "the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through" Him [John 14:6].

I just want you to know, if you think to yourself, "Man, this is bad," it's going to get worse. We're just getting in[to this]. Somebody came up after the [first] service, and said [to me], "Man, you just kind of skimmed right by some pretty serious issues." Yeah, that's because I'm saving them for later.

So, if you know Christ, rejoice in your salvation. It is your greatest reason for rejoicing. If you don't know Christ, repent of your sins, believe in what He did—His death, His burial, His resurrection to save you, and that alone—and then you, too, will have that same reason for rejoicing. Let's pray.

Father, we are grateful this morning for Your grace and kindness to us. Father, we don't deserve to be saved. We know that. We know we are all guilty sinners, we have all violated Your law, we've transgressed Your covenant. Father, we've broken what we know to be true. And, Father, because of that, we stand as guilty before You, and in need of salvation. Father, I pray that if there is anybody here who doesn't know You this morning, Fa-

ther, may Your Holy Spirit soften his or her heart, may he or she see his or her desperate situation, and may he or she cry out to Jesus, and may You save him or her, and deliver him or her from the wrath to come, that he or she might have the free gift of eternal life and begin to enjoy pleasures [that] will last for all eternity. Father, do that for Your own glory's sake. And for the rest of us who know You, may we take time to meditate on our sinfulness that we might love You much and rejoice in the God of our salvation. Father, we pray all this in Christ's name, Amen.

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