

Seek Understanding, Not Miracles, Part 3

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 9:37–45.

There is a man who is in his mid-thirties. He's in pretty good shape—[he] exercises regularly. He's a salesman, [and] does some traveling. Most of his sales are local. He has a wife, two children ages two and four, a cat named Fluffy, and a hamster named Godzilla. The hamster actually belongs to his children. One morning, he wakes up with a fever. [He] doesn't think much of it, figures he's coming down with something, so he takes a couple aspirin, [and] goes to work. His fever goes away, he feels fine, [and he] forgets about it. Two days later, he has another little fever. This time it's more persistent. He feels a little bit fatigued. His wife tells him that he *has* to go see the doctor. So, after the weekend, he consents, and, even though he's feeling better on Monday, he goes to the doctor and has a bunch of tests done. A week later, he has his doctor's appointment to find out what the tests say.

The doctor says, "I think you may have cancer." The blood work indicates that there are some scary things going on in [the man's] body. He's kind of shocked and scared because he just never thought that this would happen to him. He goes home and tells his wife. She's taken aback, scared, starts asking a bunch of questions he doesn't have the answers to. She is thinking that her husband is just too young, he's too healthy, he's too fit to have cancer. He just couldn't have cancer. The doctor orders more tests,

which [the man] gets done that week. Later on, he has [another] doctor's appointment, and sure enough, the CAT scan or the MRI reveals that he has tumors in his body.

The doctor recommends seeing a specialist. The specialist says, "Yes, this is what has happened. We're going to do surgery." They open him up, and he is so chock full of cancer and tumors [that] they just sew him back up. His health diminishes rapidly. He struggles with denial. He has a hard time believing that he might die. It scares him to think that he might die.

He racks his brain, trying to figure out, "What could I have done to stop this?" And, of course, there are no answers because he couldn't [have stopped it]. He hopes for a miracle. He even tries getting religious—starts praying—[but he] doesn't receive a miracle. Two months later, the man dies, leaving his wife and two children behind.

Now, that is a scary story. It's a scary story because we all know people or know of people that things like this have happened to. We know it's scary, especially when that person doesn't know the Lord, when that person isn't ready to die, when he doesn't know the terrors that wait for him beyond the grave, and yet he doesn't want Christ this side of the grave. But what if you knew somebody like this, and for some reason you knew he had cancer [before he knew it]? Would you tell him? What if you knew where the cure was? Would you tell him?

Well, I have news for you. There is a disease that's worse than cancer. It's always fatal, and it can kill you both physically and eternally. That disease is sin—sin passed down from Adam, passed through our parents on to us. All humanity is infected with it. You've got it, I've got it, everybody [has] it. It's bad. It's really bad. I'm here to tell you right now [that] you have the scariest disease in the world—the disease of sin. Its wages are death [see Romans 6:23], both physically and eternally.

We're going to look at this disease this morning. We're going to look at it, its pervasiveness, how it affects us, [and] its cure. We've been looking at Luke 9:37–45. Luke's purpose in chapter 9 has been to show us that Christ is, in fact, the Messiah, "the Son of the living God" [see Matthew

16:16]. He is at the end of what is called His Galilean ministry, and Luke, as he shows us the end of [this] ministry before Jesus then begins to head south toward Jerusalem, tells us four different failures [of] the disciples—the Twelve.

First, they failed to grasp the purpose of the Mount of Transfiguration. Disregard the fact that they were sleeping during prayer time, [but] they wake up, see this incredible thing, and they leave the mountain going, “What was that?” They’re scared. They totally missed the whole super-cool thing. They missed it. Second, in our text, they fail to trust God, and hence cannot cast the demon out of the demon-possessed boy [see Luke 9:40]. Third, as we shall see, Lord willing, they failed by arguing about who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven [see 9:46]. And fourth and finally, they failed because they wanted to destroy the Samaritans when they didn’t want to receive Jesus [see 9:54].

Think about that. You’re sharing the gospel with somebody: “I’d like to tell you about Christ.”

“Listen, I don’t want to hear it.”

“OK, fine,” [and] you pull out [a] gun and shoot him.

That’s what [the disciples] wanted to do. [The Samaritans] didn’t want to receive Jesus, [so the disciples say], “Can we command fire to come down out of heaven and consume them?”

“No.”

So, we are presently in the midst of the second failure. In this section, we have four points. We’re still in point one. We’ve looked at point one, sub-point one, and now we’re in point one, sub-point two: Don’t be unbelieving.

Jesus says, “You unbelieving and perverted generation.” [After] three years of training, three years of miracles, three years of private conversations, group conversations, public conversations, [the disciples] still don’t have a clue. They’re still messed up—big time! They just can’t quite get it. Jesus obviously is feeling some sanctified exasperation here. It’s like, “Come on, people! Get with it! How many more miracles do I have to do?”

How many times do I have to tell you, ‘I am the Christ, the Son of the living God’? God incarnate is here, and all you want to know is how you can heal the boy, or what miracle you can have, or you want to see the show.” They’re missing the whole big idea here. God has come among them and they’re clueless.

So Jesus says, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you?” [Luke 9:41]. We’ve already looked at the first sub-point of “don’t be unbelieving,” which is: “you unbelieving generation.” This morning, we want to look at “you perverted generation.”

So follow along as I read Luke 9:37–45.

On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.” And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.” While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, “Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

This morning we come to this same verse we've been kind of stuck in. Jesus comes down off the mountain with Peter, James, and John. The other nine disciples are arguing with the scribes, the crowd is running toward [Jesus] because they want a show, a miracle, or whatever. The man breaks through, and says, "Teacher, heal my boy because I asked your disciples and they couldn't do it."

Jesus just says, "Oh! You unbelieving and perverted generation." What does this word "perverted" mean? Literally, it means "twisted, crooked, warped, wayward, corrupt." That's what it means. It was used, for instance, of a potter. You [have] probably [used or seen a] potter's wheel. People who know how to [use the wheel] make it look easy. The guy throws [that big clump of clay] down there, in the middle of the potter's wheel. He gets some water, he starts molding [the clay], he starts thinning out the sides, and raising them up. [He has] to hold really still and be very careful as [he] makes the pot. Just then, a fly buzzes in his ear, and he flinches, pushes the sides of the pot, and pretty soon it wobbles into a big, contorted lump. It's "perverted." That's what the word literally means.

Here, [in Luke 9], it is used as a synonym for "sin." Unbelief always produces perversion—of life, of thought, of deed. When Jesus says, "You unbelieving and *perverted* generation," He's really saying, "You unbelieving and *sinful* generation." Perversion is just another synonym for sin. Unbelief in the heart produces crooked, perverse, and twisted thoughts and actions. Unbelief and perversion always go together. What I want to do this morning is I want to delve into this because we haven't done this for a while and we need to. I want to look at five aspects of sinful perversion just so you can understand it better, because there are a lot of people who don't really understand sin all that well, and they need to.

First, the origin of sin. Where did sin come from, anyway? Well, if you go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis 1, God creates everything in six literal, twenty-four-hour periods. At the end of the [sixth] day, He says, "Behold, everything is very good" [see Genesis 1:31]. There's no sin there. We read other Scriptures that tell us that during

creation God created the heavens and the earth and *all* they contain. Then, you have [Genesis] 2, which tells us more about what happened during the sixth day.

Then you have chapter 3, and right at the beginning of chapter 3, you have the serpent, whom we know is Satan, who is evil, and is deceiving the woman. So what happened? Well, somewhere between the end of the sixth day of creation and the beginning of Genesis 3, Satan rebelled against God, convinced a third of the holy angels to go with him, whom now we call demons, and Satan then, in malice, went down to earth in order to try and mess up what God had created to be “very good.” He deceived Eve into eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve, then, gave it to Adam, who willfully rebelled against the command of God. And, then, they were cursed by God. They were, at that time, sinners. They hadn’t eaten of the tree of life yet, which tells us that [their fall] happened relatively quickly. They hadn’t had any children [yet]. They were cursed, sinners, and [subsequently] so all of their children, then, are sinners. Here we are: sinners.

Second, we must understand the scope of sinful perversion. Just how broad is the sin problem, anyway? You talk to certain people and they act like, “Yeah, some people are sinners—axe murderers, serial killers, maybe Hitler comes to mind, or some other infamous tyrant.” Just how bad is the sin problem in the world? Well, a good place to start is to look at the word “generation.” Jesus says, “Oh, unbelieving and perverted *generation*.” How does Jesus use that word? The word appears [thirty-three] times in the New Testament, and it’s a general statement for everybody who exists at any point of time. Jesus, in Matthew 11:16, said, “But to what shall I compare this generation?” and He was speaking about everyone alive at that time. In Matthew 12:39 and 16:4, Jesus describes the generation as “evil and adulterous.” In Matthew 12:[45] as an “evil generation.” In Mark 8:38, as an “adulterous and sinful generation.” In Luke 7:31 [and following, Jesus describes them as] a generation [that] could not be pleased. And In Luke 11:29, [He calls them] “a wicked generation.” You kind of get the idea here.

Jesus believed His generation was wicked, and Jesus is *never* wrong. So we know that in the estimation of Jesus, which is always right, His generation—everybody alive at that time—was twisted, crooked, perverted, sinful.

I know this doesn't sound very promising. If I were to come up to you and say, "Your whole family is wicked," you would probably [gasp], but it would be true, right? You would understand that I meant anybody who qualifies as your family is wicked. You could say that to me. Would I say, "No, sir! We're holy"? No, we're wicked, too. Everybody is. That's Jesus' point. Jesus' generation was wicked. Now, does it mean that *only* Jesus' generation was wicked? No. We see other places [in the Bible] where the word is used to describe all the generations [that] would follow after, since all generations come from their wicked parents Adam and Eve. Just as salt pervades the ocean, so sin pervades mankind. There are no exceptions. All have the disease, [and] it's all terminal.

Paul, speaking of the consequences of Adam's sin in Romans 5:12, says: "Therefore, just as through one man," speaking of Adam, "sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." That's a bummer. Adam infected the entire human race. Just as dogs give birth to dogs, and cats to cats, and rats to rats, and elephants to elephants, so sinners give birth to sinners. It's the only way it works. Your parents were sinfully perverted because their parents were sinfully perverted, and their parents all the way back to Adam and Eve were sinners.

You might be thinking to yourself, "Well, just wait a minute. Are you trying to tell me that when I was born, when I was that cute, little bundle of joy, that I was actually a *sinner*?" Yes. You're following it well.

Turn to Psalm 51:5. Let's see what the Word of God has to say. This is David's great psalm of repentance and confession. Notice what David says here: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me." David is not saying that he was the byproduct of an immoral relationship, but that from the very moment of conception, the very moment he was brought forth in his mother's womb, he was conceived in sin as a

sinner. Look over at Psalm 58:3. Notice what it says there: “The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.” Notice: the wicked go astray, [and] speak lies from the womb, from birth. People are not born innocent and then become sinners. They are [born] sinners and they sin because of it.

Turn back to Genesis 8. Genesis 8 is where Noah has just gone through the flood. He’s just gotten off the ark, [and] he’s offering a sacrifice to God for preserving him from the flood in the ark. This is what we read in verse 21: “The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth.’” Like salt in the sea, like oxygen in the air, the disease of sin is pervasive. It’s part of our genetic code as the children, the sons and daughters, of Adam. You were conceived in sin, born in sin, liars before you could speak. You were just waiting to get to the [point when] you could speak so you could lie about it.

All parents discover this sooner or later. I mean, who has ever trained their toddler to say, “No! I don’t want to!” [Do] you ever see a parent say, “OK, now, when Mommy asks you to do something, go ‘No!’” Parents don’t teach their children those things. [The children] know how to do that automatically. Children are born like corkscrews and their whole life we’re trying to get them fixed—straightened out. Who ever taught their child, “Now, when I change your diaper, kick and scream.” They just do it automatically. Who needs to teach their child to manipulate, and deceive, and lie? No one. Why? They’re born knowing how. It’s in them. They have this sinful perversion passed down from *you*. You got it from your parents who got it from their parents all the way back to Adam and Eve.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, “Well, Pastor Jack, now, um, why do I need to know this? This is kind of negative, you know? I’ve been going to a church where we don’t talk about negative stuff like this—this sin, and death, and bad disease. I mean, can’t we talk about happy stuff?” Not today. Not until the very end. You would want to know if you had cancer, right? You would want to know how to get cured of it, right? You’d

want to do everything you could if you knew a friend had cancer to let them know they had cancer and what they needed to do about it. You'd want them to know the symptoms. If you had cancer, you'd want to know what the symptoms were, what you could expect. Well, I can tell you. I'm going to tell you. You need to understand this.

Imagine going to the doctor, and he does some tests on you, and he [thinks to himself], "Man, he's got cancer, but I'm not going to tell him." Would that be a good doctor? "If I told him, he might get angry at me. He might get offended. He might leave me and go get a second opinion."

No, man, you would say, "Doctor, hit me. Tell me what's wrong. What is wrong?"

"Well, it's bad, but I might offend you if I tell you."

"Tell me! Tell me!"

And so, I'm going to tell you. I'm going to try and convince you [of] why you need to understand the doctrine of sin. [You're] not just a little bit [of a sinner], either. Not one of these, "Oh, yeah, I'm a sinner." Everybody says that. You get around Christians, and I guess it's cool to say you're a sinner. "I'm a sinner."

But if you say, "Hey, you're a sinner."

"Hey! What?" They all of a sudden get offended. "Are you saying I'm a sinner?"

"Well, isn't that what you just said?"

"Well, yeah, but I was just kidding."

Why do you need to understand sin? Here it is. [Point one:] Can you understand the grace, mercy, love, kindness, compassion, and patience of God without knowing about sin? No. You can know them a little bit, but you can't *really* know them. You find somebody who's kind of flippant and ho-hum about those things, who kind of just thinks to himself [in a bored voice], "Oh, yeah, God's grace, greater than all our sins. Mmm." Or, "Yeah, God loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." What's wrong with that person? I'll tell you what's wrong with that person. That person doesn't understand what a great sinner he is, and how every sin he commits begs

God to destroy him. That the only reason he is even breathing and at that moment [is] not in hell is because God, by His mercy and grace, is keeping back from what would be just and good for Him to do, which would be to destroy [that person].

That is why people who really understand their sin are the ones who just [say tearfully], “Man, I love God! I love His grace and His mercy!” because they know what sinners they are. If you want to really see the radiance and sparkle of diamonds, you put them on black velvet and the contrast is great. Well, in the same way, [if] you want to see the magnitude of God’s grace, the magnitude of His mercy, His patience, His long-suffering, His compassion toward us, then you look at those things [against] the backdrop of sin. And then you go, “Whoa! Incredible!”

[Two]: Can you understand the doctrine of predestination without a thorough knowledge of sin? No. Every time I teach on this, there’s always the person who comes up and [says], “I don’t understand. I mean, I see it says that God predestines us right there [see Romans 8:29–30], but it doesn’t seem right. It just doesn’t seem just. Why would God choose some and not others?”

And I like to say, “So tell me about sin.”

And he says, “What?”

“That’s why you don’t understand predestination.”

What do you think would happen if God said, “OK, I’m not predestinating anybody to salvation. I’ll just wait. Come, all you who will believe.” How many would come? No one. In heaven, on judgment day, everybody would be on the hell side. And that’s all. *No one* would come!

Believe me, you don’t want to say, “You know, I don’t think God’s being fair.” You don’t want fair when you’re a sinner. You want mercy. You want God’s mercy to hold back the judgment you deserve so that you can receive the undeserved, unearned grace [that] He is willing to give you in Christ. That’s what you want. If God waited around for people to seek Him, no one would come because the only reason men seek God is in response to God first seeking them.

[Three]: Can you understand the doctrine of salvation and the gospel without the knowledge of sin? No. What do you need [to be] saved from if there's no sin? What is amazing is that a lot of churches never teach on sin. Why do you need to be saved? From what? What is the gospel? The gospel is God's message of how to escape the consequences of sin. What about the atonement? What is that about? [It's] about being cleansed from sin. What about propitiation—satisfying the wrath of God? Again, sin. What about redemption—being purchased from the consequences of sin? All the doctrines of salvation cannot be understood unless you really understand sin.

Four: Can you properly parent your children without a knowledge of sin and how it affects your child? No. We were just talking about this with our kids recently—how it's really strange when you have your first child. You go to the hospital, and you're all nervous, and your wife goes through labor, has the child, and there's this big hive of nurses running around all smiley and cleaning your kid, and poking him, and putting him in a little Plexiglas cube, and bringing him to you whenever he needs feed[ing]. You're just like, "Oh, he's just so cute!" And it's great.

Then the next day, they say, "Later!" and they give you your child. They actually give you your baby and send you home.

You're thinking, "But we don't know what we're doing!" Now, what if you were one of those parents and you actually thought that your child was perfect and innocent. Would you ever be depressed because then, when they started showing their depravity, the only conclusion you could come to is [that] you made them that way. And, really, you did, but not in the way you think. They were born sinners. You didn't make them that way. They were sinners because they were your children, because you were your parent's children, all the way back to Adam and Eve.

Now, once you understand that your child is a sinner and he's prone to wander, and he's prone to stray, then you can, from the very beginning, teach him about his disease, its consequences, its symptoms, and cure.

That's what parenting is all about. That is the most important thing about parenting.

Five: Can you understand the process of sanctification without a thorough knowledge of sin? No. How can you learn to grow in holiness if you don't know how to grow away from sin, [to] avoid [the] temptation [to] sin, flee from sin, say "no" to sin? You can't.

[Six:] What about evangelism? There are so many gimmicks out there. There are so many gimmicks. . . they just [irk] me. I just wonder sometimes, "Now, God, should I just stand up, yell at the preacher, tell him to sit down, [and] go up there and preach?" I mean, [preachers need to] tell [people] about Jesus. I don't want to hear anything about raising hands. I don't want to hear anything about walking forward. I don't want to hear anything about praying a sinner's prayer.

You can go up to anybody on the street and say, "[I'll give you] \$100, pray the prayer." They'll do it and it doesn't save them. There is only one way a person gets saved, and that is through the gospel.

You go up to somebody, [and say], "Hey, you know, I have some philosophical arguments." Great.

People come to me, [and say], "Yeah, I shared with somebody."

"Oh, good. You shared with them, huh?"

"Oh, yeah."

"What did you do?"

"Oh, well, we talked about the existence of God."

And I say, "Well, did you tell them the gospel?"

"Well, no. We never got. . ."

"You didn't share with them!" The gospel is the power of God for all who believe [see Romans 1:16]. *The* power of God for all who believe. The *only* power of God for all who believe. The gospel is the dynamite. You deliver the goods, and then the Holy Spirit makes it work. The gospel is the dynamite, [and] God pushes the plunger. That's it. You're just the delivery person.

You go there and say, “Hey, this is the gospel. This is who you are, this is who Christ is, and this is how to appropriate the truth.” Push the plunger — “Go, God, go!” Sometimes He does, sometimes He doesn’t, but God does that part. You deliver the dynamite.

There are so many methods, and gimmicks, and people out there thinking they’re doing the work of God, but they never tell people: “You are a sinner and Jesus is the Savior. He lived a perfect life, He died on the cross for your sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. If you place your faith in Him, trusting only in what He did to save you, He will.” That little bit of message just never gets out. It never quite comes out.

Seven: Can you have a correct view of politics, government, and the world without a knowledge of sin and its consequences? No. There are a lot of well-intentioned Christians out there who are doing everything they can to try and help the government stem the tides of perversion. It doesn’t work. Should we look to the government for deliverance from the consequences of our sin? No. Are more laws, or stiffer laws, or greater penalties going to save sinners from hell? No. Listen, you can take a person who knows Jesus, who’s saved, and put him into a totally lawless society, [a society] that permits any sort of wicked behavior, and [the Christian] is still going to do what’s right. Why? [It is] because they live by a higher law. [Earthly law is] irrelevant. But I’m telling you, [if] you take a sinner who’s in rebellion against God, and you constrain him, he’s still a sinner against God. It doesn’t fix him. The gospel is what fixes him. Men are sinners, and I’m telling you [that] there a lot of people [who] put a lot of money and a lot of effort into trying to fix people through government. [It] never works.

Eight: What about the eternal punishment of sinners in hell? There are some people who say, “I could never believe in a God who would punish sinners in hell for all eternity.” Then you don’t believe in God because there’s only one God and He does it. [Do] you know why He does it? A lot of people have this idea in their minds that when an unbeliever dies, they see God and they [gasp, and say], “He exists! Jesus is real! The Bible’s true. I ‘repent in dust and ashes’ [Job 42:6].”

And God says, “Too late, pal, into hell you go.”

That’s not what happens. They hate God all their lives on earth, they die, and they hate God more. As eternity continues, they hate Him more and more and more. They shake their fists at Him. Their “weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matthew 8:12, etc.] is not because they have repented and now they can’t go to heaven, it’s because they hate God and they would *never* want to go to heaven. And so, if you don’t understand man’s sinfulness, his hostility toward God apart from the grace of God, you’ll never understand why hell is a good thing, a just thing.

[Do] you wonder why churches are doctrinally sick, and dying, and dead? Most churches today are making a conscious effort not to preach about sin. It’s like the doctor. You go to the doctor, and he finds some terminal illness in you. [If] he doesn’t tell you, he’s a *bad* doctor. You want a doctor [who] tells you the truth. In seeker-sensitive churches today, [they] never mention sin, never mention repentance, never mention the wrath of God, never mention hell, never do church discipline. [Do] you wonder why those churches are sick and full of people who don’t know Christ? [It is] because sin is absent, and sin’s the whole problem. Sin is the disease. How can you get somebody to be cured from a disease they don’t even know they have and you don’t want to tell them they have it? [Seeker-sensitive churches] are pathetic physicians.

Thomas Watson said [that] many ministers “sow pillows under their people’s heads so that they do not awake until they’re in hell.” That’s what [seeker-sensitive churches] are doing. That is exactly what they’re doing.

That’s what we see in our text [in Luke 9:37–45], too. Here Jesus has been with them for three years. He is the Son of God. He has done the miracles of God. He’s told them He’s God. They’ve had revelation [that] He is “the Christ, the Son of God” [see Matthew 16:16]. He has given them the power to work miracles. They’ve done it. They’ve seen it. Then what happens? He comes down off the mountain and they’re arguing, and they’re bickering, and they’re wanting a miracle. “Oh, He can’t do it!”

And Jesus is just [thinking]: “Ahhhh! You perverted generation.” Sin had totally distorted their view. They were missing the big point.

Now, if you’re out there thinking, “OK, Jack, I’m convinced now. I’m a sinner. But how far has my disease progressed? I mean, what stage am I in?” Five. Defcon five. That’s where you are. You are totally depraved, thoroughly sinful, completely corrupt.

Now, whenever you start talking about the doctrine of total depravity, people starting [saying], “Wait a second, here. I’m not as bad as other people.” A lot of people object to the doctrine of total depravity because they don’t even know what it means. Let me give you [what] I think [is] the best definition I have ever come across. [It’s] from the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*:

Total depravity is the scriptural teaching that mankind is totally, thoroughly, and completely corrupted by sin in all parts of his being. Total depravity means that man is unable to please God on his own or earn any saving merit from God. It is also helpful to understand what total depravity does not mean. 1) It does not mean that people cannot do things which are relatively good in the sight of other men. 2) It does not mean that all men are as sinful as they can be or become. 3) It does not mean that men have no concept of good and evil. 4) It does not mean that men, because of their depravity, will indulge in every sin to every degree.

That is a great definition. Total depravity just means that sin has affected every part of you, not that everybody is Hitler. The Scriptures teach [that] you are corrupted in every part, totally corrupted by sin. There is no innocent part of you [that is] unaffected by sin.

So we’ve looked at the origin of sin, the pervasiveness of sin. Now, let’s look at the degree to which this generation and others is infected by sinful perversion. Why did God judge the world with the flood? Do you remem-

ber? Key verse: Genesis 6:5. It says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” That is a masterful sentence—“every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” That is *bad*. That is stage five.

“But, oh!” you say, “Yeah, then He sent the flood and He wiped out all those wicked people and so that fixed that.” No. Remember what we read after the flood? Genesis 8:21: “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his” what? “youth.” All the flood did was decrease the number of sinners. It didn’t fix the problem.

“But,” says one, “you know what? I see I’m a sinner, but I can change myself. I’m going to just say ‘no’ to sin, like drugs. I’m going to get my act together, be more moral, more holy, more right before God and then He’ll accept me.” Jeremiah 13:23 says: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin,” Michael Jackson excepted here, “Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.”

Can the leopard just say, “You know, I’m tired of these spots,” and take them off? No.

“But,” you say, “my heart tells me I’m a good person. I’m not that bad. I’m not that evil.” Really? Jeremiah 17:9 says: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” [KJV]. Proverbs 28:26 says: “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.” Do you know what Jesus thinks of your heart? Mark 7:21–23:

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

“But wait!” one says. “I know I’m a sinner, but I’m going to seek Christ, I’m going to find Christ, I’m going to figure out the way to heaven, and then He’s going to save me and I’ll escape.” Really? John 3:19–20:

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Jesus is “the Light of the world” [John 8:12]. Apart from the grace of God, men are repelled by Jesus, repelled by the truth. They will not “come to the light lest their deeds should be exposed.” It [is saying that] if God put a pure, cold glass of water in the midst of a dry, thirsty humanity, and said, “Drink,” everybody [would run] away. He has to pull out the lasso of His grace, lasso them, and say, “Come here! Drink!” That’s what that word means in John 6:[44]: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me” lassoes him, and drags him against his will, “draws him.”

And you still think, “Well, you know, OK. I’m a sinner. I see here that if it wasn’t for God’s grace I wouldn’t be seeking God, but I’m really not *that* bad.” Well, here’s what the Apostle Paul said in [the] section where he’s dealing with just how sinful men are [in] Romans 3:10–18. What’s interesting in this portion of Scripture is [that] he’s merely quoting other Scriptures. Everything he says here [is] all quoted from Old Testament texts. So this is doubly inspired—it was inspired the first time, and now he’s inspired to say it the second time. This is what he says is God’s estimation of everyone. Now, you think about this the next time you hear, “Oh, so-and-so, he’s a good person.”

THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY

HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE. THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING, THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS; WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS; THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN. THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.

That is God's estimation of all mankind—a sinful, perverted generation.

Well, we've got a problem. We've got a really big problem because not only do we have the origin of sin, not only do we have the pervasiveness of sin, not only do we have this incredible depth of sin, [but] sin affects us in bad ways. We've already seen it in [other Scriptures], and we see it here, too. John says [that] men, because they're sinners, don't want to come to the Light [see John 3:19–20]. Paul says in Romans 3 [that] "THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD."

That is a problem! That's the guy who has the terminal disease and he won't go to the doctor. He doesn't want to go to the doctor even though he knows he has the disease. That happens sometimes. People know they're sick, and [they say], "I'm not going to a doctor. I'd just rather die." And they do.

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:21: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Some people say, "Well, I may be a sinner, I may be corrupt, I may be totally separate from God, and I may love my sin, but I'll tell you this, I have a mind, I have a heart, I have reasoning, I have a conscience, and I'm going to figure this out, and I'm not going to hell." No, you aren't [going to figure it out]. Paul says you will become "futile in your speculations and

your foolish heart is darkened to the truth.” Later, in Romans 8:5–8, Paul says:

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is [listen to this 1)] hostile toward God; [2)] for it does not subject itself to the law of God, [3)]for it is not even able to do so, and [4)] those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

First Corinthians 2:14: “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them.” That’s a problem. If this message is what saves you and you can’t understand [it], you’re in big trouble. If your whole purpose in life is to glorify God and you cannot please Him on your own, you are in trouble. Titus 1:15 says: “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.” Do you get what the Scriptures are teaching here? People are sinners. They are sinners big time—through and through, totally corrupt. Their “heart is darkened” [see Romans 1:21], their “conscience is defiled” [see Titus 1:15], their “speculations are futile” [see Romans 1:21]. They don’t seek [the] Light, they love darkness. They won’t come to Christ [see John 3:19–20]. There is “none who seeks God, not even one” [see Romans 3:10]. They can’t please God. The message is in God’s Word, but they can’t understand God’s Word. The purpose of their existence is to give glory to God, [but] they can’t do it. This is what we mean when we talk about hopeless, helpless sinners. That’s what we’re talking about. God, because we are totally helpless, comes and He saves us by His grace, and we do not contribute anything.

Turn to Romans 5, where we will look at the cure briefly. We’ve looked at it many other times. This is the good part of the whole sermon. Ro-

mans 5—the cure. Look at what [Paul] says at the beginning of the chapter: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” [5:1–2]. This word “justified” means “made right before God.” We are made right before God through Jesus Christ because of God’s grace. That’s what [Paul is] saying there.

Skip down to verse 6. Now, this is what’s incredible. [If] you don’t understand sin, then you don’t think this is incredible. But [if] you understand what we just looked at, this is really incredible: “For while we were still helpless”—there’s the hopeless, helpless sinner—“at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” Here I am. “For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” [5:7–8]. That is amazing! We’re ungodly, we’re helpless, and we’re sinful, and Christ is sent to die for us. “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” [5:9] That is incredible! Safe from God’s wrath through Christ, by Christ’s blood, by His death? Yes! “For if while we were” now he uses a different term, “enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled,” or already having been saved, “we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult”—glory—“in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” [5:10–11]. This is incredible.

Now, when you understand that, you realize we’re down there, we’re blind, groveling, God-hating enemies and sinners. And God, by His grace, looks down on these pathetic, pitiful worms, and He says, “I will save some of them.” And He does—“as many as believed in Him, He gives the right to become the children of God,” “as many as received Him” [see John 1:12]. “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]. Paul tells the Corinthians: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I

also received,” what is it? “That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day” [1 Corinthians 15:3–4]. [Do] you believe that? God will change you. He will transform your life, He will cure your disease, and it’s the only thing that will work.

I can think of no other hymn that describes the cure for sin better than Julia Johnston’s hymn “Grace, Greater Than Our Sin.” Let me just read the words to you. Think about this. Think about this in light of everything we’ve just studied.

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,
Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss.
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.
What can avail to wash it away?
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide.
Whiter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?

Chorus: Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within.
Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!

That is the cure. It's the only one. [Do] you know what's great about it? You are a wicked and perverted generation, but God's grace is sufficient to save any sinner from his sin. He will do it, and He has done it. If you don't know Jesus Christ, if you don't love Christ, if you don't love God, then you need to repent of your sins and receive. "To as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" [see John 1:12]. Do it this morning, and God will save you apart from anything you do. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your kindness to us. We thank you that Your Word is so crystal clear about our fatal disease called sin. And yet, it is also very clear about its cure. Father, if there is anybody here who doesn't know Christ, I pray right now [that] he or she would cry out in his or her heart in desperation and just beg you to save him or her. We thank You that You came to justify the ungodly and that "while we were yet sinners" [see Romans 5:8] Christ died for us. And that, Father, "if we confess with our mouths Jesus as Lord, and believe in our hearts that You raised Him from the dead, we will be saved" [see Romans 10:9]. Father, may that happen in hearts this morning. And for the rest of us, may we meditate on our sin, our corruption, our unworthiness before You, and then in contrast marvel [at You] and praise You for Your grace, Your mercy, Your justice, Your holiness, and all Your goodness. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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