

Session 3: Where It Went Wrong: The Brokenness

Passage: 1 John 1:8-10 (NIV)

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Key Idea: Believing Lies:

Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

The enemy is continually putting lies before us, in an attempt to deceive us to fall into sin and be disobedient from the plans and design God has for us. It is important for all Christians to remember that we should keep our focus on Christ!

Discussion Questions:

- What are some lies that you have believed or have seen others believe, leading to negative consequences in your life or their lives?
- How can you guard yourself against believing these lies in the future?

Key Idea: Temptation of the Eyes:

Genesis 3:6 (NIV)

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

One of the many dangers of sin is that to the human eye it can often look beneficial and even life-giving. As disciples of Jesus we must always be aware of the dangers of sin, even when it looks good or fun.

Discussion Questions:

- How can the temptation of the eyes lead you astray in your walk with Christ?
- What steps can you take to remain cautious and discerning about what may appear right but is ultimately sinful?

Key Idea: Consequences of Actions:

James 1:14-15 (NIV)

¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Every action we ever make, whether good or bad has consequences. Our sin results in consequences that lead to hurting someone, either someone else or even ourselves. Meaning the cost of sin always outweighs the temporary pleasures it tries to offer.

Discussion Questions:

- Why are consequences an important aspect to consider when discussing the brokenness caused by sin?
- How have you experienced or witnessed the consequences of sin in your own life or in the lives of others around you?

Application Questions:

- Has it ever occurred to you that God may want to use your trials to spread His gospel? What are you facing right now that might be a doorway for sharing your faith? Do you feel any resentment toward God for the suffering you have experienced in your life? Read 2 Cor 1:3-4 and consider how God has comforted you – and opened doors for you to do the same for others?
- Let's get straight to the point: If scripture commands us to share the gospel and we knowingly neglect to do so, there is a disconnect. ("If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them." – James 4:17) What is the biggest obstacle for you to sharing the gospel? And what are you going to do about it? How can we, as a group, help each other to navigate these obstacles and act in obedience?
- We often find encouragement (and insight) from others' experience. Ask the group to share details about the last time they shared the gospel with someone. How long ago was it? What was that person's response? What did they learn from that experience?

Commentary

The presence of sin, the confession of sin and the cleansing from sin
1 John 1:8-10 (NIV)

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

a. **If we say we have no sin:** John has introduced the ideas of walking in the light and being cleansed from sin. But he did not for a moment believe that a Christian can become sinlessly perfect.

- To *think* this of ourselves is to **deceive ourselves**, and to *say* this of ourselves is to lie – **the truth is not in us**.
- “Our deceitful heart reveals an almost Satanic shrewdness in self-deception... If you say you have no sin you have achieved a fearful success, you have put out your own eyes, and perverted your own reason!” (Spurgeon)
- There are few people today who think they are sinlessly perfect, yet not many really think of themselves as *sinner*s. Many will say “I make mistakes” or “I’m not perfect” or “I’m only human,” but usually they say such things to *excuse* or *defend*. This is different from knowing and admitting “I am a sinner.”
- To say that **we have no sin** puts us in a dangerous place because God’s grace and mercy is extended to *sinner*s, not to “those who make mistakes” or “I’m only human” or “no one is perfect” people, but *sinner*s. We need to realize the victory and forgiveness that comes from saying, “I am a sinner – even a great sinner – but I have a Savior who cleanses me from all sin.”

b. **If we confess our sins:** Though sin is present, it need not remain a hindrance to our relationship with God – we may find complete cleansing (**from all unrighteousness**) as we confess our sins.

- To **confess** means, “to say the same as.” When we confess our sin, we are willing to say (and believe) the same thing about our sin that God says about it. Jesus’ story about the religious man and the sinner who prayed before God illustrated this; the Pharisee bragged about how righteous he was, while the sinner just said *God be merciful to me a sinner* ([Luke 18:10-14](#)). The one who confessed his sin was the one who agreed with God about how bad he was.
- **Confess** translates a verb in the present tense. The meaning is that we should *keep on confessing* our sin – instead of referring to a “once-for-all” confession of sin at our conversion.
- You don’t have to go to a confessional to confess your sin. When you are baptized, you are confessing your sin by saying you needed to be cleansed and reborn. When you receive communion, you confess your sin by saying you need the work of Jesus on the cross to take your sin away. But of course, we need to confess our sin in the most straightforward way: by admitting to God that what we have done is *sin*, and by asking for His divine forgiveness, based on what Jesus has done on the cross for us.
- Our sins are not forgiven *because* we confess. If this were the case – if forgiveness for a sin could only come where there was confession – then we would all be damned because it would be impossible for us to confess every sin we ever commit. We are forgiven because our punishment was put upon Jesus, we are cleansed by His blood.
- However, confession is still vital to maintain *relationship* with God, and this is the context John speaks from. As God convicts us of sin that is hindering our fellowship with Him, we must confess it and receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with God to continue without hindrance.
- Confession must be *personal*. To say, “God, if we have made any mistakes, forgive us” isn’t confession, because it isn’t *convinced* (saying “if we made”), it isn’t *personal* (saying “if we made”), it isn’t *specific* (saying “if we made any”), and it isn’t *honest* (saying “mistakes”).

c. **He is faithful and just to forgive us:** Because of Jesus’ work, the righteousness of God is our *friend* – ensuring that we will be forgiven because Jesus paid the penalty of our sin. God is being **faithful and just** to forgive us in light of Jesus.

- “The text means just this – Treat God truthfully, and he will treat you truthfully. Make no pretensions before God, but lay bare your soul, let him see it as it is, and then he will be faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.” (Spurgeon)
- The promise of 1 John 1:9 shouldn’t lead us *into* sin, saying “Hey, I’ll go ahead and sin because God will forgive me.” It should lead us *out of* sin, knowing that God could only be **faithful and just to forgive us our sins** because the wrath we deserved was poured out on the sin. Since each sin carries with it its own measure of wrath, so there is a sense in which each sin we commit added to the agony of Jesus on the cross.
- There is no *more sure* evidence that a person is out of fellowship with God than for someone to contemplate or commit sin with the idea, “I can just ask for forgiveness later.” Since God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, we can be assured that the person who commits sin with this idea is not in fellowship with God.

d. **If we say that we have not sinned:** If we deny the presence of sin, we are self-deceived and are denying God’s Word. Yet, though sin is always present, so is its remedy – so sin need never be a hindrance to our relationship with God.

- The idea that **His word is not in us** is related to the idea that Jesus is *the Word of life* (1 John 1:1); if we refuse to see sin in us, we show that Jesus is not in us.
- “No man was ever kept out of God’s kingdom for his confessed badness; many are for their supposed goodness.” (Trapp)

Key Idea: Believing Lies:

Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

A warning: Don’t be cheated by philosophies and traditions.

a. **Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy:** The false teaching among the Colossians was marked by an emphasis on **philosophy and empty deceit**. Most of all, it was **according to the tradition of men**. It had the stamp of *man* on it, not *God*.

- Peake says the best sense of the phrase **cheat you** is actually, “lead you away as prey.” It also had the ideas of robbing and plundering. “Their goods were the salvation they had received from Christ; and both the Gentile and Jewish teachers endeavored to deprive them of these, by perverting their minds, and leading them off from the truths of Christianity.” (Clarke)
- This **philosophy** that threatened the Colossian Christians was a strange eclectic mix of early Gnosticism, Greek philosophy, local mystery religions, and Jewish mysticism. The philosophy threatening the Colossian Christians was so dangerous because it was not obviously sinful and licentious. It was high-sounding and seemed highly intelligent.
- Vincent on the word **philosophy**: “It had originally a good meaning, *the love of wisdom*, but is used by Paul in the sense of *vain speculation*, and with special reference to its being the name by which the false teachers at Colossae designated not only their speculative system, but also their practical system, so that it covered their ascetic practices no less than mysticism.”
- There is significant debate among commentators as to the exact nature of the Colossian heresy. Some see it as predominately an expression of early Gnosticism with some Jewish mystical elements added; others see it as primarily Jewish mysticism with a few aspects of early

Gnosticism. Whatever the exact origin or composition of this heresy, it seems clear that it had both elements.

- The connection to early Gnosticism is clear from the way Paul brings forth his points.

· Gnosticism taught that God (as a Perfect Spirit) could not come into direct contact with the material world. Paul took care to point out that Jesus is God, and He came *in the body of His flesh* (Colossians 1:19-22).

· Gnosticism taught that since God could not have direct contact with the material world, that God Himself did not create the world, but He worked through lesser spirits or angels. Paul took care to show that Jesus was the creator of the world (Colossians 1:15-16).

· Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) taught that God did not deal directly with man and the material world, but that He dealt with the world through a series of mediators. Paul took care to show that Jesus did the work of reconciliation Himself (Colossians 1:19-20).

· Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) greatly esteemed these supposed mediators, and considered them angelic beings of a sort. Paul was careful to warn the Colossians that angels should not be worshipped (Colossians 2:18).

- The connection to Jewish mysticism is clear from the way Paul brings forth a few more points.

· Jewish influence on Christianity emphasized dietary laws. Paul took care to say that Christians were not under Jewish dietary laws (Colossians 2:16).

· Jewish influence on Christianity emphasized the observance of particular days as an obligation. Paul took care to say that Christians were not under these obligations (Colossians 2:16).

b. According to the tradition of men: The Colossian heresy promoted itself as *traditional*. It could trace some or many of its ideas back to traditions among the Jews or the Greek philosophers or both. Paul here warned that **the tradition of men** has no equal authority to the word of God.

c. According to the basic principles of the world: The ancient Greek word translated **basic principles** is *stoicheia*. It is a word that can mean several different things based on their context, and Paul may have used such a broad word to cover a variety of meanings.

- “The noun *stoicheia* means primarily things placed side by side in a row; it is used of the letters of the alphabet, the ABCs, and then, since learning one’s ABCs is the first lesson in a literary education, it comes to mean ‘rudiments,’ ‘first principles’ (cf. Hebrews 5:12, as the ‘rudiments’ of the gospel).” (Bruce) Because of this association with fundamental elements, the word came to also refer to basic elements such as earth, water, air, and fire.
- Many ancient mystery religions thought of the world as a dangerous place, threatened by spirits or spiritual forces they called *elements* or *elemental forces* (such as Paul uses the word in Colossians 2:8 and Colossians 2:20). They thought one was protected from these dangerous spiritual forces by either worshipping them or by finding protection under a greater deity or spiritual power that was superior to these *elements*.
- Yet, one might say that Paul’s meaning here certainly *includes* an answer to early Gnostic ideas, but the meaning also goes beyond those specific ideas. “It has been frequently taken in this sense as the ABC of religious knowledge... the expression must apply to something both [Jews and pagans] had in common.” (Peake)
- Common to both Jews and pagans was the basic idea of *cause and effect* and in a sense it rules nature and the minds of men. We live under the idea that we get what we deserve; when we are

good, we deserve to receive good; when we are bad, we deserve to receive bad. Paul warned the Colossians to not subject themselves to this grace-eliminating kind of thinking, and to consider themselves dead to it.

Adam and Eve both disobey God in their own way.

Genesis 3:6 (NIV)

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

a. **So when the woman saw:** Eve surrendered to this temptation in exactly the way John describes in 1 John 2:16. First, she gave in to the lust of the flesh (**saw that it was good for food**), then she gave in to the lust of the eyes (**pleasant to the eyes**), then she gave in to the pride of life (**desirable to make one wise**).

- Jesus was tempted in the same three-fold way: an appeal to the physical appetites, an appeal to covetous and emotional desires, and an appeal to pride (Matthew 4:1-11).

b. **The woman saw that the tree was good for food:** Eve's perceptions were partially true and partially false. The tree was *not* really **good for food**, though Eve was deceived into thinking it was so. The fruit probably was **pleasant to the eyes**, though that shouldn't mean much. And it was only true in Eve's *mind* that the tree was **desirable to make one wise**.

- We can see the precise truth of Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 2:14, that Eve was *deceived* when she sinned. In her mind, she thought she was doing something good for herself.

c. **She took of its fruit and ate:** Satan could tempt Eve, but she didn't have to take it. The taking was all her doing. Satan couldn't cram the fruit down her throat. Eve was responsible. She couldn't rightly say, "the devil made me do it."

- As with every temptation, God had made for Eve a *way of escape* (1 Corinthians 10:13). She could have simply run from Satan and the tree, but Eve didn't take God's way of escape.

d. **She also gave to her husband with her:** Not only did Eve sin, but also she became the agent of temptation for Adam. But when Adam ate, he was not deceived as Eve was. Adam sinned with his eyes wide open, in open rebellion against God.

- Therefore, it is Adam and not Eve who bears the responsibility for the fall of the human race and for the introduction of death into the created order (Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22). Eve was tricked into sinning; Adam knew exactly what he was doing (1 Timothy 2:14).
- Many have speculated that Adam sinned because he didn't want Eve to be alone in the fall, and he ate of the fruit out of a romantic impulse. This may well be true, but it makes Adam's sin not one bit less rebellious. Rebellion against God is not "better" when motivated by a romantic impulse.
- "Take and eat" will one day become verbs of salvation, but only after Jesus had lived in the world of Adam's curse and surrendered to death.

Consequences of Actions: How temptation comes and works.

James 1:14-15 (NIV)

but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

a. **Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed:** God doesn't tempt us. Instead, temptation comes when we are **drawn away** by our own fleshly **desires** and **enticed** – with the world and the devil providing the enticement.

- **Drawn away:** “It is either a metaphor taken from a fish enticed by a bait, and drawn after it, or rather from a harlot drawing a young man out of the right way and alluring him with the bait of pleasure to commit folly with her.” (Poole)
- Satan certainly tempts us, but the only reason temptation has a hook in us is because of our own fallen nature, which corrupts our God-given **desires**. We often give Satan too much credit for his tempting powers and fail to recognize that we are **drawn away by our own desires**. Some people practically beg Satan to tempt them.
- Some who like to emphasize the sovereignty of God say that God is responsible for all things. Yet God is never responsible for man's sin. In his commentary on this text, John Calvin himself wrote, “When Scripture ascribes blindness or hardness of heart to God, it does not assign to him the beginning of the blindness, nor does it make him the author of sin, so as to ascribe to him the blame.” Calvin also wrote, “Scripture asserts that the reprobate are delivered up to depraved lusts; but is it because the Lord depraves or corrupts their hearts? By no means; for their hearts are subjected to depraved lusts, because they are already corrupt and vicious.”

b. **When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin:** Springing forth from corrupt **desire** is **sin**. Springing forth from **sin** is **death**. This progression to death is an inevitable result that Satan always tries to hide from us, but we should never be deceived about.

- “James represents men's *lust* as a *harlot*, which entices their understanding and will into its impure embraces, and from that conjunction *conceives* sin. Sin, being *brought forth*, immediately acts, and is nourished by frequent repetition, until at length it gains such strength that in its turn it *begets* death. This is the true *genealogy* of sin and death.” (Clarke)