



FALL: GOD JUDGES

Part 5 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | April 27, 2008

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Well, howdy, Mars Hill. If you're new my name is Mark, and glad to have you with us. Tell you what we're doing today. We're continuing in our Doctrine series. Today we're looking at the fall, human sin, depravity, the curse – should be really encouraging. And we'll deal with the fact that God judges. So I'll go ahead and pray and we will get right to work on a very, very important study of what is one of the most significant days in all of human history, a day that if you do not understand, the rest of human history makes no sense whatsoever.

So Father God, we begin by declaring that you are a good God, that you made this world and everything in it good. You made us male and female. You declared that to be very good. And God, everything that is not good and very good is the result of the fall and sin and the curse and death. And Lord God, as we come to this very sober subject today, it is my prayer that the person and the work of Jesus would be our hope, and that the Spirit would regenerate our hearts, renew our minds, and refresh our love for Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

I'll start by saying this. Something's gone terribly wrong. How many of you look at the world in the global cosmic scheme of things and are just perpetually frustrated or despairing or discouraged or bewildered or perplexed? On the more micro level, you look at your own life, the people you know, the people you love. You see suffering. You see injustice. You see evil. You see death and sickness and mourning and loss and pain. And what I find curious is that Christian and non-Christian alike, people simply cannot accept that the way the world is, is the way that the world should be. Something has gone terribly wrong.

And it's not that there hasn't been sincere efforts to fix things. We've fought wars to kill the bad guys – no one can agree on who the bad guys are. The bad guys think that the other guys are the bad guys. Much money has been spent. Governments exist in large part to try and improve the lives of their citizens, at least in theory. Education has been promulgated with the understanding that maybe if we just learn more we'll do better. Some have said, "Well, just give it time and we will evolve." All of that's been tried. Maybe if we just throw more money at the problem, more social services, more governmental and non-profit agencies trying to do more good, to help more people. Maybe that will make the world a better place and improve the quality of life for its citizens. And nothing seems to help. We make attempts at medical discoveries. Maybe if we prescribe more pills and diagnose more problems and improve overall health – to no avail, to no avail.

It seems like every effort has been made and nothing has improved the quality of life of people on the earth. And as a pastor I would tell you that this is the most excruciatingly painful part of the job. As a pastor, along with the other pastors at this church and pastors all over the world, one of the primary things we do is we deal with sin. We have a front-row seat to sin and carnage and its effects. We deal with people who are in sin – some repentant, some unrepentant. We deal with the victims of sin. And we deal with the consequences of sin. And sometimes we deal with all of those together. And sometimes in so doing we sin, and we contribute to the problem, and we're supposed to be helping.

The result is for me, if I'm totally honest with you, some really dark moments of sadness and grief and despair – not hopelessness, but a deep, painful awareness that something has gone terribly wrong and that the way the world is, is not the way the world is supposed to be. And the way people treat each other is not the way they're supposed to treat each other.

I was up late last night with my wife Grace and I was particularly burdened for a certain handful of people who either are in sin or have been sinned against or are experiencing the effects of sin from those with whom they are connected in relationship and community. And Grace said – she said, "I'm worried about you." I said, "Why?" She said, "Emotionally you hit these places where it seems like you carry that load so deeply it just sort of devastates you." I said, "It does. It really does."

There are some who like to live isolated lives and disconnect from technology and not keep their eyes open because they just don't want to see it and they just don't want to deal with it. As a pastor there is no choice. You have to live in the reality of sin and its effects with people – constantly. And sometimes its devastating. Sometimes it is devastating.

The number of people that I have heard personally tell me, "I was abused. I was raped. I was molested. My dad beat me. He walked out on me. My spouse cheated on me. Someone said they loved me, they slept with me, and dumped me. My spouse said that they were faithful and they weren't, and now I have contracted a disease from them." You get calls as a pastor late at night. I still remember one. "Pastor Mark, I just suffered my seventh miscarriage. Why? Why do my babies keep dying in my womb?"

I can still remember the most devastating early pastoral moment I had. A guy called, said, "I need you to come to the hospital right now." It was late at night, like midnight, 1:00, 2:00 in the morning. It was very late. The church was very small. I was a brand new pastor, mid-twenties, totally unseasoned and unprepared. I go to the hospital, meet this man who's in the church. I say, "What's going on?" He said, "I have no relatives at all except for my mother. For some reason she got really depressed, got into her car, doused herself in gasoline, set herself on fire. She's now in a coma in the other room. Her life is being sustained by a machine. Her entire body is burned. Her organs are failing. And apart from that machine, she's going to die. What do I do? Do I unplug it and kill my mom and be alone with no living relatives? Or do I let the machine keep her alive? What do I do?" He looks at me. What do you say? What do you say? What do you do?

Apparently sin had so discouraged her that she took her own life, and then he has to deal with the effects of sin. And now I have to deal with the effects of sin, and – and as we deal with this subject today I need you to know that I don't come at it just from a philosophical, theological perspective. I'm a pastor. I'm a husband. I'm a father. And I'm a sinner. And this is painfully real continually.

That being said, I want to talk about the fall and the day that human history was forever changed, and the day that you and I need to fully understand to make sense of anything. And we'll do so by starting with the question, where did sin originate? And we find that in Genesis 3.

And for those of you who are smug Christians that say, "I know this. I know this." Let me tell you. I've walked with Jesus now for almost 20 years. I've read thousands of books. I don't think that anyone fully comprehends the depth of Genesis 3. I don't believe that there's one person who would hear this message and truly be able to say, "I understand Genesis 3. I get it. I understand. I feel it." Some texts like this can become so overly familiar that we sort of read them, put everything in its theological category, and then moved on, as opposed to emotionally being devastated as we should.

Here's the story of Genesis 3: "Now the serpent" – we read in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 that this is Satan. The Bible doesn't record the fall of Satan and demons. Satan's a created being. He's an angel. He didn't want to worship or love God. He became proud in his heart. Isaiah and Ezekiel say he was cast out of heaven. Jesus says that a third of the angels were cast down with him. The Bible does not record the sin and fall of Satan. Genesis 3 is called the original sin, but truth be told, there was a sin that preceded this sin, and that was the sin of Satan and the angels that we now know as demons. This is the original human sin. Satan just shows up.

"The serpent was more crafty." Some of you think you're pretty smart. Some of you think you're really smart. Some of you think you have good insight and wisdom. Some of you are way too confident in your own capacity and ability, either your experience or your intellect or your emotional intelligence. The serpent is very crafty. He's smarter than you are. He's more clever. He is more nuanced. He is more observant. He's been around for a lot longer than you. He's seen a lot more. And he has deceived and destroyed people who are far more competent than you. He is "more crafty than the other beasts of the field that the Lord God had made."

He comes to the woman. "He said to the woman" – that's our mother Eve – "Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" Is that what God said?" Remember the story. God made the earth, said it was good. God made the man, said it was not good for him to be alone – Genesis 1 and 2. God made the woman, brought him to the man. They loved each other. They were married. They were naked without shame. Everything was "very good." Everything was perfect. God spoke to them, said, "You can eat of any tree that I have given you with one exception. Do not partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you partake of it you will die." That's spiritual death, initially separation from God. Physical death eventually, cessation of life.

"Did God say you cannot eat of any tree in the garden?" Is that what he said? Not at all. God was a good God. He said, "You can partake of any tree but one." There was one exception. Satan here is changing, manipulating God's word. We looked at it during the week of the study of the doctrine of revelation, and what I told you was that we at Mars Hill, we take the Bible literally. And if you don't, you're like Satan. All he does here is adds one word to God's word – "any tree." That little word "any" – no. Say, "What's the big deal? So he didn't take God's word literally." Well, you either take God at his word or you add to or subtract from his word, and the result is devastation.

"And the woman said to the serpent" – verse 2, ladies, I need you to feel this. She responds. Some ladies for the sake of nicety and politeness, they engage in conversations they never should. The same is true of men, but here is an example of a woman doing this. Men, to be sure, are equally guilty. Some of you are overly merciful. Some of you are overly weak. Some of you are overly compassionate. Some of you are overly tolerant. And when someone who is a gossip, when someone who is a liar, when someone who is a divisive, when someone who is deceptive engages with you, they're working in league with the serpent.

Here's what I need you to do: not engage, not engage. What Eve should've done is simply walked away. "I do not want to participate in a conversation that dishonors God." All she had to do was walk away. She didn't even need to say that. All she needed to do was literally turn her back on Satan, turn her face toward God, and walk away. How many of you right now are sucked into conversations, conflict, gossip, divisiveness, error, folly because you lack the courage to simply not respond? To not respond.

See, some of you would say, "But aren't we supposed to be Christians? Aren't we supposed to be nice? Aren't we supposed to be compassionate?" Yes, but not with Satan, and not with those who are working in league with Satan. If you engage it only goes bad. There's nothing to be gained. Walk away. Walk away.

Perhaps the best thing she could've done is rebuked him. "You are lying. You are contradicting God. Shame on you. You need to repent," and walk away. Sometimes that's what needs to be said and that's what needs to be done. She engages in the conversation. She hears him out. She considers.

The Scriptures then say twice in the New Testament, "She will become deceived." She'll get confused. She wasn't confused when she was talking to God. She became confused when she allowed conflicting voices to come into her life. Who are you listening to? What books are you reading? What articles are motivating you? What websites are you logging on to? What radio and television programs are informing you? What friends are whispering in your ear? What conversations right now should you not be involved in?

She responded. "The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"" Is that what God said? God didn't say they couldn't touch it. She added to God's word. Many like to do this. They like to add to God's word. That's what books, theologians, emotions, experiences, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history – whatever it is – tradition, preference, culture take God's word and add something to it, and in so doing alter it altogether.

"But the serpent said to the woman" – verse 4 – "'You will not surely die.'" Here's what he's saying: "God is a liar. God is withholding from you. There are wonderful, great, enjoyable experiences that God has chosen not to share with you." If you believe the lie that God is withholding on you, then you will sin to obtain that which you believe God is withholding on you, whatever that is: a relationship, a possession, an experience, an accomplishment. It's discontentedness. It's dissatisfaction. And it's distrust.

"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" "God is holding you back. God is not allowing you to achieve your full potential. God is not giving you all that you deserve. You are amazing. You are wonderful. You have great potential. And God is the one who is not allowing you to achieve those things." This is the temptation to walk away from God and in so doing exchange someone or something else for God, believing that that is a higher treasure.

Verse 6: "So when the woman saw that the tree was" – one – "good for food" – two – "a delight to the eyes, and" – three – "that it was to be desired to make one wise" – 1 John, I think it's 2:16, John talks about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life – the three categories of sin. The lust of the flesh – it would taste good, it would feel good. The lust of the eyes – it was attractive and looked good. And the boastful pride of life – it would make me like God. Sin is going to come in through physical pleasure, through visual observation, and it will always tempt and test your pride.

"She took its fruit. She also gave some to her husband who was" – where, gentlemen? Where was he, gentlemen? He "was with her, and he ate" – verse 6. You men need to feel this. That's your father. What's he doing? Nothing. Some of the ancient, older Puritans had a line that said, "When Adam was away, Eve fell astray." That's not how it went down. Where's Adam when all of this transpires? Satan enters into the perfect, idyllic garden. Adam had just married his wife. He sang to her, "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman for she was taken from Man." He was appointed to love her and protect her and defend her and encourage her, to worship God with her. She was to help him in imaging God on the earth. She probably at this point thinks she's being helpful, but she's not. I find that so many women's sins are efforts to be helpful that are unhelpful, but the intention is to be helpful. That's why she was deceived, the New Testament tells us.

Gentlemen, what is Adam doing when Satan is lying about God, tempting the woman? What is the man doing? Nothing. Nothing. This is a deep theological conviction at Mars Hill Church, that one of the worst things men can do is nothing. Nothing. He said nothing. He did nothing. Some men abuse their authority and they become harsh and mean. They yell at their wife. They scream at their children. They make threats and demands.

Some men avoid their responsibility. It's this eternal Peter Pan syndrome where they don't want to have a job or a wife or responsibility. They avoid all kinds of conflict and responsibility.

Some abandon their responsibility. They do become a Christian. They become a member of a church. God entrusts to them a wife. They become a father. They get a job. And they abandon it. Things get a little rough and they run. They give up. They quit. These are cowards and traitors.

And some abdicate their responsibility. God places responsibility on men and then they hand it off to someone else. Make someone else raise their children. Make someone else love their wife. Make someone else pay their bills. Make someone else lead their church.

Some men abuse, some abandon, some avoid, and some abdicate responsibility. And it starts with your father. Some of you men are just absolutely deplorable. You say nothing. You do nothing. You involved yourself in nothing. You accomplish nothing. You assist nothing. And all the while, you sit back quietly saying, "I think I'm a pretty good guy," because you wrongly think that sin is only sin of commission – doing a bad thing – not sin of omission, which is failure to do the right thing.

Adams' sin is a sin of omission. Were you to go up to Adam and say, "Do you do drugs?" "No." "Do you drink?" "No." "Do you look at porn?" "No." "Are you stealing?" "No." "So you're a good guy?" No, because you're not doing what you're supposed to do. You're not rebuking Satan. You're not teaching sound doctrine. You're not loving your wife. You're not defending your family. You're not taking responsibility.

When the Bible uses the New Testament word of "head" to describe the role of men, it is not that men are to be dictators and domineering. It's that they are like Jesus, to love their wives, to love their children, and to involve themselves for the blessing and the well-being and the protecting and the defending and the providing of that which God has entrusted to their care and those whom God has appointed them to love.

I would submit to you that one of the greatest problems in the world is men who are like Adam, and many of you are like Adam. You are no help at all. You are a silent, passive coward. I would say you were worthless, but because you bear the image of God there's still possibility through repentance to become worthwhile. But you and I, men, we need to look at Adam and say, "That's our father. Those are our proclivities, to say and do nothing. To sit back and to let the world go by, to let sin happen, to let our wives and children suffer, and then to participate. Horrible.

Verse 7: "The eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." I told you that when God made us he made us for relationship with him, one another, creation, and ourselves. Sin is going to affect, mar, stain, distance all of those relationships. Here there is distance between the man and the woman. Previously they're naked without shame. Here they cover themselves. "I don't trust you. You don't trust me. We're no longer one, we're two. There's distance. You live your life, I'll live mine. You cover your sin, I'll cover mine."

"They heard the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and the wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord." Now their relationship with God through sin is affected. They became foolish. When you sin you become foolish. Hiding from God? Hiding from God as if God can't see behind a tree.

"They hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to" – whom? See this, men. Did he call to her? No. Did he call to them? No. He called to the man. Why? The man is responsible. That's what it means to be the head. It means that you take responsibility even if you don't think it's your fault because God holds you responsible for the well-being of your family. And we as a church hold men responsibility. It doesn't mean that women have no responsibility. But it means that if the man is not walking with God and loving his wife and serving his family, we start with the man because he is the first problem. And that's what God does.

He calls out "to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Great question. Every man should wake up everyday, look in the mirror and ask, "Where am I?" "And he said" – Adam does – "I" – you'll notice he's not speaking "we." They're no longer a "we," it's a couple of "I's," no longer one, but two. That's what sin does to a marriage. "I did this. They did that. I do this. They do that." It's not we. You're not allies anymore. Now you're enemies.

"And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.'" Lots of I talk. "He said" – God does – "Who told you you were naked?" I love God. He gets right to the point. He doesn't have lengthy discussion. He doesn't go down rabbit trails. "Well, how do you feel about that? What caused that?" Bottom line: Like God, we're to speak to men as men – direct, blunt, to the point, no beating around the bush, no fancy nomenclature. Here's God's question, nice and simple: "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you" – didn't give any suggestions – "to eat?" Bottom line: "Did you do what I told you not to do?" Bottom line. You speak to men as men. You speak to them directly.

"The man said" – what? "The woman." I think some men marry just to have a perennial excuse for their pathetic-ness. "The woman." He doesn't start with, "Yes, I sinned, God." He's immediately shifting the blame over to the woman. "The woman whom you gave to be with me" – there's more than a subtle inference there. "You made the woman. She's the source of all my trouble. She's responsible and, to some degree, you are as well. I'm a victim. I think I should get a protected class status. I think I should get some sort of tax deduction, maybe free counseling, a parking sticker that lets me get close to the door. You've really complicated my life and I feel like I have some benefits coming my way here." "She gave me fruit of the tree" – I'm a total victim here – "and I ate."

"Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'" You notice, the woman is equally responsible. She's an image-bearer of God. "The woman said, 'Satan did it.'" "The devil made me do it. The serpent." She doesn't blame her husband. How many women never blame their husband? They blame his boss, his dad, his family of origins, his upbringing, his pastor, his friends. So many women have a hard time really being honest about their husband. But ladies, let me tell you this. You were made to be a helper, and you're not help at all if you're a liar. Say, "Well, I don't want to disrespect him." You don't need to disrespect him, but you also don't need to disrespect God and fail to speak honestly about his sin.

"The Lord God said to the serpent" – here's judgment – "Because you have done this, cursed you are above all the livestock, above the beasts of the fields; on your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed or offspring" – it's singular, not plural. Galatians 3 and 4 says this is Jesus' coming. This is called the Protoevangelium, the first gospel. God preaches it. He says, "There will be separation between you and the serpent. From the seed of the woman" – it's an inference of the virgin birth. Elsewhere in Scripture children always come from the father. Here no father is mentioned, just the mother, that through you, Eve, will eventually come a man and he will do war with Satan. And Satan will harm him, but he will come as the great dragon-slayer and he will defeat the dragon. It's the promise of the coming of Jesus, friends. "He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel."

"To the woman he said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.'" Being a mother is a wonderful thing. It's a blessing. It's a great honor. But this explains why women struggle with infertility and miscarriage, why when children are born it is in great pain that they are born, and that to some degree every mother experiences varying kinds of pain emotionally throughout the rest of her life in the raising of the children. As God is a parent, a Father and has relationship with us, so now the mother experiences the pain of being in a parental role. She has some sympathy toward God because she is that kind of painful child toward God that her child is toward her.

"And your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you." In Genesis 4 the same language is used, that sin wants to rule over Cain. That the woman will not trust her husband. She will not work with her husband. She will not follow the leadership of her husband. The New Testament repeatedly uses the word "submit." Even in saying that many women bristle. That's what it's talking about. You will not want to trust a man. You'll not want to be with a man. You'll not want to follow your husband's lead. There will be this real conflict, and a woman's life will be marked by her children and her husband and this struggle.

"To Adam he said, 'Because you've listened to the voice of your wife'" – it's not a sin to listen to your wife. A prudent wife, Proverbs says, is from the Lord. Genesis 2 says the wife is to be a helper. But when God says one thing and your wife contradicts it you're not supposed to listen to her then. You're supposed to listen to the Lord.

"And have eaten of the tree of which I commanded, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the

days of your life” – your work is going to be hard – ““thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.”” Now creation is affected, that other category of relationship. ““And you shall eat of the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.””

Men, your world is cursed. Everything under your dominion is cursed. You say, “Why is it that my job is cursed, and everything I do is thorns and thistles, and nothing ever comes together, and everything is hard? And as soon as I feel like I have life and order it breaks again.” Because God loves you. You are as difficult to God as that which is under your dominion is difficult to you. And as you struggle and toil and fight and are frustrated, God says, “Now you know what I feel like having you under my authority.” And God does that, men, to humble us and to cause us to identify with him.

“How come everything in my life is always breaking, falling apart, and fighting me?” God says, “Because I want you to see what you’re like. And I want you to see how difficult my job is. And I want you to be humble. And I want you to be repentant. And I want you to see it as I see it. And I want you to feel it as I feel it. ‘Cause I love you.”

“The man called his wife’s name Eve” – which means the mother of all living – “because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them.” That’s God’s grace and provision.

“Then the Lord God said, ‘The man has become like one of us’” – the Trinity – ““knowing good and evil.”” Right, now it’s his relationship with himself. He’s changed for the worse. He’s seen sin and tasted it. ““Now, lest he reach out his hand to take of the tree of life and eat, and live forever –’ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Why did God kick them out of the garden? ‘Cause they would’ve eaten of the tree of life. Say, “What’s wrong with that?” They would’ve lived in sin forever. God in his grace kicked them out so that they could die, that Jesus could come, that they could rise, that there could be a new heaven, new earth, new creation, and that they could live forever by grace without sin. I need you to feel that. Ladies, that’s your mom. Gentlemen, that’s your dad. That’s the worst day in human history. That the day that’s affected every day since. And if you don’t understand that day, every other day makes no sense at all.

Leads to the next question. What is sin? How do we define this? Genesis 1:31 – when God made everything he said it was what? Very good. In the Hebrew the Jews have a word they call shalom. Shalom means perfection, wholeness, everything is as it should be, beauty, glory, honor, love, reconciliation, no wars, no famine, no disease, no death, no tears, no suffering, no loss, no mourning, no funerals, no locks on doors, no police officers, no jails, no soldiers – no need. Shalom. Everything that is not shalom is sin and/or the effects of sin. Sin is the marring of shalom. It’s the vandalizing of shalom. It’s the attacking of shalom. It’s the marring of shalom. It’s war on shalom.

Jesus comes as the Prince of what? Shalom.

It shows up as death, suffering, injustice, boredom, annoyances, miseries, fears, illness, pain, sorrow, grief, despair, nuisance, tragedy. The Bible uses a constellation of images to talk about sin, as rebellion, folly, self abuse, madness, treason, death, hatred, spiritual adultery, missing the mark, wandering from the path, idolatry, insanity, irrationality, pride, selfishness, blindness, deafness, a hard heart, a stiff neck, delusion, unreasonableness, and self-worship. The Bible uses multiple words and images to describe sin.

Let me define it for you. If you don’t have a functional definition of sin, when you hear that Jesus died for sin it won’t mean anything to you. Sin is omission and commission. Omission is not doing what you’re supposed to, commission is doing what you’re not supposed to. I’ll give you an example. I know one little girl, her parents had sins of omission. They let her go play at a friend’s house without going to the house, without investigating the house, without seeing what was going on in the house. She was sexually abused by an older uncle who was living in that house, a total sicko. It was a dangerous place. Their sin was a sin of omission. They handed their little girl to strangers and she was repeatedly sexually abused. That’s omission. The man who violated the little girl, his sin was commission. The parents didn’t do what they were supposed to, and the man did what no man is supposed to do. He did what Jesus says is so horrible that it would be better for him if a huge rock were tied around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

Sin includes our thoughts. They count. Our words – they count, including those we type. Our deeds – what we do. And our motives – why we do what we do. That means the guy who walks up and greets a gal at church because she’s attractive and he’d like to sleep to with her. It may initially look like New Testament koinonia fellowship, but in his heart it’s lust. Motives count, too.

It’s godlessness, which is ignoring God. It’s idolatry, which is giving yourself to someone or something other than Jesus and trading Jesus for someone or something else. It’s not just a crime. There are things in our world that are crimes, but there are things that are sins that are not crimes. If you commit adultery the police will not arrest you. If you lust the police will not arrest you. If you lie the police will not arrest you. Those are sins, not just crimes.

Sins also are the breaking of laws. It’s the breaking of God’s laws in the Bible. It’s the breaking of human laws. It’s the breaking of laws put down by authority, like if you’re a kid dishonoring your parents, if you’re a student not obeying the rules of your teacher, if you’re a member of a church not taking the counsel of your pastors.

It’s also violating your own conscience, where the Spirit of God convicts you. The Bible says anything that does not proceed from faith, which is trust in God, is sin. And if God has convicted your conscience you need to abide by that. And if you don’t you’re in sin.

It includes perversion, which is using a good thing for sin. Technology is a perennial example. You could send prayer requests via e-mail or text

message, or gossip. You could send Bible studies or pornography over the Internet. A good thing that allows people to communicate is perverted and used for evil.

It includes pollution, which is taking something that is good and then adding to it something that is evil so it's defiled and made impure. Most horrendous example I could give you are the innumerable, innumerable meetings I've had with women who said, "I used to snuggle with my dad and I loved him and we were close. And then when I started developing as a young woman he started touching me inappropriately." It's a really good thing for a daddy to snuggle with his girl, to tell her he loves her, to encourage her, to be affectionate with her. And it's absolute demonic pollution for that to then be manipulated for evil and for sinful touch. That's pollution.

It's turning a good thing into a God thing, to where you live for money, sex, fame, power, glory, intelligence, achievement, comfort.

And it's founding your identity on anyone or anything other than Jesus. One mother explained it this way. Her children were in their teen years, struggling. "Why are you so distraught?" "I've given my whole life to be a mother, and if my children are a wreck then my whole life is in vain." "So you're worthless?" "Yes." "No. You're an image-bearer of God. You're made by God. He loves you. You are to be a good mother. But if your children wander and your life comes to an end and you see no value in your existence, it's because you worshiped the office of Mom. And you used Jesus to make you a better mother, you didn't really worship Jesus. And that may account for the problems with your boys."

Is all sin equal? In one regard it is. Jesus says in Matthew 5:48 that we're to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Anything other than perfection is sin. James, Jesus' brother, says in James 2:10 if you violate one point of God's law, you violate all of it. It's perfect and imperfect. Jesus says in Matthew 5, for example, lust and adultery – they both count.

But on another hand, though all sin is equal, not all sin is equally devastating in its effects. That's why there's a judgments of works. Some people will be punished more in hell than others. That's why James says not many of us should presume to be teachers because teachers, like me, will be judged more strictly. 1 Timothy 5 around verse 8, Paul says a man who's a Christian – any man who does not provide for the needs of his family has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Any lazy man who doesn't like to work, any lazy man who doesn't like to get up, any lazy man who can't keep a job, any lazy man who won't feed his family – he's worse than an unbeliever. There are degrees of devastation from sin.

Here's the next question. I think it's incredibly important. How does Adam's sin affect me personally? Romans 5. We've looked at the origination of sin, the definition of sin, now we'll look at the imputation of sin. I'll read this in its totality and summarize it for the sake of time. Romans 5:12-21: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man" – what man was that? Adam. Who sinned first? Eve. Who's held primarily, firstly responsible? Adam. Who's responsible for the fall of humanity into sin? Adam. I want you men to feel the weight of responsibility – not so you can lord it over people and be a jerk to your wife, but so that you wake up everyday with your knees trembling dependent on the grace of God, wanting to do good and to help and to serve and to bless.

"And death through sin" – the wage for sin is death – "and so death spread to all men" – everyone is affected by Adam's sin – "because all sinned." We sin by nature and choice, he is telling us. "For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one to come.

"But the free gift" – that's the salvation by grace – "is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift that the one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass or sin brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. If, because of one man's trespass" – or sin – "death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, as one trespass" – that's Adam's sin – "led to condemnation for all men" – that's you and I, mankind, male and female – "so one act of righteousness" – that's Jesus – "leads to the justification" – the declaration of righteousness in the sight of God our judge – "and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience" – that's Jesus – "the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Here's what he's saying. There are two humanities. There are two categories of people: those who are under Adam, those who are under Jesus. That's it. See, we tend to see things in terms of nations and races and genders and cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds – two categories: those who are under Adam, those who are under Jesus. And here's what Paul is saying: Those who are under Adam receive his sin. Those who are under Jesus receive his sinlessness. Those who are under Adam die. Those who are under Jesus live. Those who are under Adam are experiencing condemnation. Those who are under Jesus experience justification, declaration of righteousness. Those who are under Adam are unrighteous. Those who are under Jesus are made righteous by Jesus. Those who are under Adam are disobedient. Those who are under Jesus are obedient. To be in Adam you need to be born. To be under Jesus you need to be born again. That Adam's sin is imputed, reckoned, imparted to you, and that Jesus' righteousness and salvation through his sinless life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection over Satan, sin, and death is imputed, imparted, reckoned to you.

Adam is your father. When he sinned our whole family was involved. Adam is our representative. He represented us well. You and I would've made the same decision. And he is our head. When he made that decision he made it on behalf of all of us. And Jesus – 1 Corinthians 15:45 – is the last Adam. He as well did something for us, represented us – died for our sin, rose for our salvation. You're under Adam or Jesus. Death, life, Sin, forgiveness. Hell, heaven. Everyone: two humanities. And Adam's sin affects us all.

That means today we have a sin nature. You're not born as a good person with a blank slate. Psalm 51:5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity" – or sin – "and in sin did my mother conceive me." Some of your translations will say that I was sinful from my mother's womb. Psalm 58:3: "The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray from birth speaking lies." Ephesians 2:3 says, "We are by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." You are conceived with a nature of sinful, foolish rebellion against God. Your natural proclivities because of your sin nature are to repeat the sins of Adam and Eve.

That's why Jesus needs to give us a new nature. We still have the flesh, but to become a Christian is to receive a new nature because we are born, conceived with a sin nature.

I'll clarify a few things. What is total depravity? This is the first point of the five points of what's known as Calvinism. We don't believe in utter depravity. When you sin – we're sinners by nature and choice. When we sin we don't cease to be human. We're not less than human. We're still image-bearers of God. The image of God is marred and stained and tainted, all of the magnificent potential we have is now for evil and not good, for self, not God. But even after sin in Genesis 5, Genesis 9, 1 Corinthians 11, James 3, it keeps saying that we bear the image and likeness of God. So we're not utterly depraved. We're not as bad as we could be. We could do more evil more intensely more frequently.

But we are totally depraved in that all of our person is affected, stained, marred, broken by sin. This includes our mind. We do not think as we ought. We do not think the thoughts of God after him. You can't just trust your mind. This includes our emotions. What we feel is not always right. Some of you say, "But this is what I feel." If you're an intense feeler learn to doubt your feelings a little bit. They could be wrong. They're affected by sin. If you live in your head and you're a thinker, don't always trust your analysis of the situation. You could be wrong. Be humble.

It includes our thoughts, our feelings, our will, our emotions. It includes our body – all of who we are is affected, stained, marred, tainted by sin. Total depravity means that sin has totally affected the totality of our person.

Now, we still bear a conscience, Romans 2 says, because we're image-bearers of God. We still have some semblance or echo of right and wrong. The result is we hate injustice. And we want love. And there are things that we long for. Even though we're sinners and it works itself out not to God's glory. That's why there are people like the good Samaritan who lived seemingly a decent life, or occasionally at least do a decent thing. That's just an echo of the image of God that's marred, stained, bent, and broken – but not utterly, utterly eradicated so that we are essentially animals.

We'll hit a few more. What are some sinful views of sin? Do you know that we sin, and then we sin on how we see the sin? That's how sinful we are. Okay, here's why I tell you this. I am a pastor who desperately loves his people. Some pastors have actually said, "I won't talk about sin, death, judgment, hell, wrath, blood – that's negative." But if we don't understand truly our condition then we don't have a right diagnosis. We can't then prescribe a right remedy. Nothing changes.

I love you.

Here are nine sinful views of sin. The first is thinking that sin is just breaking of some rules. The rules that God gives in Scripture are representative. They come from his character so when you break God's rules, you're really violating God's nature. You're breaking relationship. See, when you and I see laws – drive 55, don't jaywalk – we say, "Well, who cares?" See, behind God's laws is God. And when you break God's laws you're violating relationship with God. So it's not just the legal breaking of a law, it's the violation of a loving relationship.

Number two, a sinful view of sin is – some Christians who say, "Well, Jesus died for all my sins, so I'm forgiven no matter what I do. So therefore I don't need to take my sin very seriously because Jesus forgives it." I dealt with one guy – I'll give you a series of painful examples. And this is what pastors do. We deal with sin all the time. I dealt with a guy who was cheating on his – married, committed adultery, divorced, married again, committed adultery, getting a divorce. Meet with him: "What are you doing? Are you a Christian?" "Oh, yes. I'm a Christian. I believe in Jesus." "Why do you keep committing adultery on your wives and divorcing them?" "Well, you know, Jesus died for all my sins." He did. He died that you might put your sin to death.

Jesus does forgive all your sins, but should we sin, Paul asks, that grace may abound? By no means. If someone has that attitude I have to ask, "Are you even a Christian?" He pulled this stupid thing on me – tried to argue theology. He said, "You can't lose your salvation." I said, "That's totally true for Christians, but not for you." "So what are you saying? I'm not a Christian?" I'm saying, "Look, if I had to lay money in Vegas right now, I'd put it over on the line that you don't know Jesus. If you can keep committing adultery on wives, not even worry about it, and say, 'Jesus died, so I can cheat on my wives.' Really? Jesus got out of the grave so you could keep committing adultery with no conviction or repentance? No. Jesus rose so you could live a new life – that you would hate sin and love Jesus. And if you love sin, you hate Jesus."

Some Christians, though: "Eh, Jesus died. I can do it. It's not that big of a deal. I'm covered." Be careful. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Number three, a wrong view of sin is some who are so paranoid by their sin that they're believing wrongly, "If I don't confess every sin I'll go to hell, 'cause one of my sins won't be forgiven." No, Jesus died for all our sins past, present, and future. And if you forget to repent of one his death was for all sin.

Number four, some say, "God knows my heart, and it's really what's in my heart that counts. And yeah, I may say or do some bad things but, you know, God knows my heart." He does know your heart. Proverbs says that out of the overflow of your heart comes your life. It's the wellspring of life. Jesus says, "Out of the overflow of your heart the mouth speaks." Your life is a reflection of your heart. You can't say, "My heart's good, my

life's bad, but God knows my heart." No. All life is, is an echo of the heart. There's absolute congruence between the heart, the depth, the center, the sum of who we are, and the life that we live. You can't say, "I'm a good person down deep in my heart. I just commit adultery or theft or murder or greed or lust or pride or gossip or divisiveness with my mouth and with my hands." No, they're connected to your heart.

Number five, some say, "Well, sin is fun and I don't want to live a boring, dull life. I want to have a little bit of fun, so sometimes I allow myself to sin a little bit 'cause I like to have a little bit of fun." If you love Jesus, sin is not fun. Some of you Christians have had fun sinning and then you become a Christian. Right, you're a non-Christian who loved to drink or sleep around or whatever it was. And then you become a Christian, you go to do it – is it fun? It's misery. You feel terrible. The Holy Spirit convicts you. You realize, "What I used to love, I don't love. I feel convicted. I feel terrible." Sin is not fun. That's the lie – the lie that Satan told Adam and Eve. "God's withholding something really cool. Go get it. He's not giving you full pleasure. There's something more." It's not fun at all.

Number six, some would say, "It's not a sin if no one gets hurt." I hear this all the time with singles who are living together, sleeping together, fornicating. That's a sin. "Oh, nobody's getting hurt. We're both consenting adults. Nobody's getting hurt." Really? I assure you it's hurting both of you. It will affect whomever, whenever, however you marry. Those who are in the church, those who are in the family – you say you're Christians. Those family, friends, co-workers who are observing you, it affects them. It certainly affects your relationship with God because sin separates us from God. Don't say that nobody's getting hurt. Lots of people are getting hurt.

Number seven, some say it's only a sin if you get caught. Secret sin doesn't count. You know what? God knows, and it does affect. It does affect. I see this all the time in marriage. Wife comes in, husband's distant, husband's cold, husband doesn't pursue me, "I don't feel like we're emotionally connected." I just start here: "How much porn do you look at?" "What's that have to do with anything? I thought we were talking about communication." "I'm communicating. How much porn you looking at?" "What does that got to do with anything?" "How much porn you looking at?" "Well" – "Okay." If you're looking at any that's too much. You feel guilt. You feel shame. You separate yourself from your wife. You hide behind your little proverbial fig leaf. You're behind the tree hoping God can't see you. Your tree is the monitor."

Say, "Well, it didn't affect anything until I got caught." It affected everything. Your wife knew. She knew something was wrong and you were gone. Secret sin counts. And here's the truth: It's not a secret. God knows. And those who are close, they don't know what the sin is but they see its effects.

Number eight, some people like to say about sin, "Well, if it's very popular then it's okay. Everybody's doing it." Or sometimes we'll make a cultural argument. "Well, that's just how we do it in our culture. We do it wicked, but it's not a sin because we're of a certain culture."

And number nine, some Christians like to make everything into a sin issue even when it's not. I see this all the time. I'll give the first examples that come to mind. I know many people are single and then they get married. And their single friends still want to hang, and they tell their single friends, "Look, I can't hang out with you like I used to." Maybe every Tuesday night was guys' poker night or every Wednesday night was gals', you know, go out and have dinner night. "Now that I'm married or now that I got kids my life has shifted, and I can't do all the stuff I used to do when I was single." It's not a sin issue. It's a new season of life. And their friends say, "You've sinned against me. You've betrayed me. You've let me down." Well, it's not a sin. Life's changed.

Christians love to make everything into a sin issue. Sometimes it's a difference of opinion. Sometimes it's a difference of conscience. "You think this is right, I think this is right. You want to worship in this kind of church, I want to worship in this kind of church." You know what? We both love Jesus. It's not that big of a deal. And then you make it a sin issue. "Well, you're in sin 'cause the way I do it's the way everybody should do it." Some Christians like to make everything into a sin issue. You need to know this: Not everything is a sin issue. Not everything is a sin issue. Sin pervades, affects everything, but sometimes people just have different issues of conscience, different ways of doing things, seasons of life, transition – it's not a sin. It's not a sin.

I've seen this repeatedly in the history of the church, when people come in and say, "My convictions have changed. I don't agree with certain doctrines and Mars Hill." You know, "I want to baptize babies," or, "I think women should be pastors" – all these sort of debated issues. And they'll say, "Okay, I'm leaving. I'm going to another church." You say, "You know what? I love you. You are a Christian. Your convictions are different than ours, but I'm not saying you're in sin. I would debate with you biblically the position, but you're not sinning against me or us by transitioning to another church." Because at the end of the day, you're gonna stand before God and give an account. And I'll give an account. But let's not call it sin right now. Let's not declare war. Let's not fight. Let's dialogue, debate. Let's open the Bible, try to come to resolution. And if we can't, let's live at peace and move on. It's not always a sin issue – not always. Not always a sin issue.

What are some sinful responses to sin? Some people love to minimize their sin, number one. "It's not that big of a deal. You're totally overreacting." Minimizing. "Yes, I did it. Big deal."

Number two, "I'm the exception to the rule. I know that's true for everyone else, but I have special circumstances. I'm the exception to the rule. I know you're not supposed to live with your boyfriend or girlfriend, but they lost their job. And we're gonna get married. And we love each other. So we're gonna live together and sleep together – but it's okay, 'cause we're the exception." What I think is curious is everyone thinks they're the exception.

Number three, blame shifting. "It's not my fault. It's their fault." Right? We see this in Genesis. "It's the woman and you, Lord God" – that's what Adam says. The woman says, "No, it's the devil" – blame shifting. Dealt with a guy not long ago – screams, raises his voice, yells at his wife, total violation of 1 Peter 3: "Be considerate with your wife, don't be harsh with her." Say, "Dude, you cannot scream and yell at your wife." He said, "Look, she makes me really angry." "Oh, well, then scream at her." (Laughter) See, that's blame shifting. "She makes me yell at her." No she doesn't. Whether or not she sins against you – we'll get to that in a minute. How you respond, that's your responsibility. You can't blame it on her.

Do this all the time with couples that are committing adultery – both or either. They always blame it on the other. “Well, they’re cold. They’re distant. They’re no fun. They’re no good.” Doesn’t excuse sin. There’s no blame shifting here. You can’t blame it on them.

Some of you are hardcore mercy people. You want to see everyone as a victim. You want to give them the benefit of the doubt. You want to hear them out. You want to – you want to listen. You have a hard time saying, “Maybe they did sin.” But the way you’re responding, that’s sinful. You’re responding to sin with sin, and you have no right to do so. If you’re a hardcore mercy person, if you’re the “give everybody the benefit of the doubt” person, if they’re hurting then they must’ve been sinned against, if they’re crying then they must’ve been sinned against, be very careful that you don’t allow them to blame shift. Be very careful that you get both sides of the story. Proverbs says, “Everyone seems right until the other side is heard.” Be very careful. People love to blame shift. “It’s not my fault. They made me react in this way.”

Diversion – number four. This is changing the subject. How many of you are parents and you realize kids learn this very early, right? One kid hits the other kid. You say, “What did you do?” They say, “Look, a birdie!” (Laughter) Change the subject. People do this, too. What I love is people who, when they sin and you confront them in their sin, they change to talk about how they feel about you confronting them about their sin. That’s wrong. “That really hurts my feelings. I feel like you’re judging me. I thought we were friends.” Don’t change the subject. We’re talking about your sin, not how you feel about me telling you you’re in sin. We’ll get there – maybe later. “It makes me really sad that you would say that I did that.” You did it. Let’s not talk about how you feel about what I said that you did. Let’s talk about what you did. Change the subject, change the subject. That’s diversion.

Number five, partial confession. You tell a little bit of what you did hoping they won’t find the rest, and move on, right? I met with a couple not long ago. “Have you been faithful to your spouse?” “Well, there was one time I kissed somebody.” I’ve just learned – it’s partial confession. You never get the whole confession all at once. “Yes, here’s the whole truth, nothing but the truth.” It’s like, “Here’s a little bit of the truth and I’m hoping that this persuades you to stop looking for the rest.” I said, “Okay, who else? What else?” “Well, I just told you.” I said, “I know. Look partial confession happens all the time. Tell me the whole story.” “Oh, and I slept with this person, and I slept with this person. And I did this, and I have online discussion. And I’m in chat rooms, and I do all these things.” It’s like, “Ah, now we’re getting to the whole confession.”

Partial – how many of you right now, you’ve got partial confession? People know little bits and you’ve not been totally honest?

Number six, Paul talks to the Corinthians about worldly sorrow, which is, “I feel bad about the consequences of my sin, but not my sin. I feel bad that people are hurt. I feel bad that people are upset. I feel bad that people are negatively affected. But I don’t really feel bad about my sin. I just feel kind of bad about the effects.”

Number seven, excuse making. And the excuses are innumerable. “You know, you’re looking at that all wrong. That’s your cultural presupposition” – the philosophical argument. “That’s your opinion” – that’s the more street-level version. Excuse-making. “I have a good reason. You don’t understand. Let me tell you the whole story.”

Number eight, victimization. “I’m a victim. I can’t help it. My dad abused me. I was raped. I was molested. I can’t help it.” We have very formal genetic arguments. “My genes are bad. I have bad genetic predisposition.” Your father’s Adam. We all have bad genetic predisposition. “It’s my culture. It’s my upbringing. I grew up poor – grew up rich. Didn’t get enough affection.” It may be all true. You were sinned against. All of it counts, but that doesn’t mean you’re a victim who says, “For the rest of my life, then, I get to act in certain ways because I was sinned against. That gives me a blank check to live in this way. Pity me. I’m a victim.” You may be a victim but when you sin you victimize others, and victims rarely think of that, rarely think of that.

Number nine, mere confession – that’s without repentance. That’s saying, “I know it’s wrong,” but not changing. Those people are so confusing, ‘cause you say, “That was a sin.” They say, “You’re totally right.” Okay, cool, and then it keeps happening. “So, I thought you agreed it was wrong.” “It is wrong. Thank you for pointing that out.” And then they do it again. You’re like – those people are so confusing because you feel like you’re reconciled, you’re not. They’re confessing, but not repenting. They’re agreeing, but not changing. They’re being honest, but they’re not being humble.

And number ten, one of the worst ways to respond to sin is just to tell people, “You know what? You’re a good person. You need to find all the things in your life that you do well. You need to focus on those. And we need to encourage you, ‘cause I think you can do better.” That’s totally denying depravity, totally denying sin. It’s conveniently overlooking sin. And it’s just reading Genesis 1 and 2 – “You’re a good person. Try harder. I’m sure you’ll do better next time.” And so much self-help and pop theology does that. “You’re a winner! Try harder. Look at all the things you do well. Be proud of yourself. Be like Satan, I’m sure you’ll do better.”

How does God respond to sin? Last question. This will be my close. We see it with our first parents, and this is how God works. First, he judges sin. He tells the man, “Here is your sin.” He tells the woman, “Here is your sin” – and the consequences. He tells Satan, “Here is your sin and the consequences.” Judges sin – you need to know that God judges sin. If he didn’t he wouldn’t be a good God. Wouldn’t be just, holy, or good.

Secondly, God gives grace. He pursues them. They don’t pursue him. They’re hiding. He pursues them. He speaks to them – that’s really kind.

Additionally, God teaches them. “Here’s what you did. Here’s what you did. Here’s what you did.” When you hear God give the commands in Genesis, don’t think of a judge giving out a law. Think of a Father giving out wise counsel that the children didn’t heed, and then Dad shows up and says, “Here’s what you did and here’s what you did. Teachable moment. Let me explain this to you. I love you, but what you’ve done is horrible and there’s some serious consequences for this.” That’s a loving Dad.

He then covers their shame, maintains their dignity, and he sends them away so that they would not live forever in a state of sin and death. That rather physical death could come, in addition to spiritual death, so that they could then be resurrected one day like Jesus for newness of life.

And then God makes the promise – Genesis 3:15 – that Jesus is coming, that Jesus is coming. 1 Corinthians 15:45 calls Jesus the last Adam. Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. Where Adam sinned, Jesus was sinless. Where condemnation came through Adam, salvation came through Jesus. Where Adam’s sin is imputed, reckoned, imparted to us through Adam, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed, imparted, reckoned to us. And it all happens at the cross – we’ll get there later in the series. 2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him who knew no sin” – Jesus – “to become sin” – that would be our sin, all laid upon him, suffered and died in our place out of love – “so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” – back in the state that Adam originally enjoyed.

Friends, let me close with this. The right response to sin is always complete repentance. Please repent of your sin. Please repent of your sin. It is killing you. It is killing others. It is contributing to the horrific nature of the world. It is separating you from God. It could cause you to spend eternity in the conscious, eternal torments of hell. Repentance is a gift that God gives. Repentance is the love of God in action. Repentance is only possible because of the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus. And friends, you and I – we are sinners. We are sinners. And Jesus came to save sinners.

Father God, I pray for my friends. I pray for the Spirit and power gift of repentance, God, which is changing our mind about who’s God – not us, but you. It’s a change of heart, that we don’t want to sin, we want to obey. That we don’t want to worship self, we want to worship you. God, it’s a change of thought and word and deed and motive. It’s a willingness to walk in the light as you are in the light. It’s a humility, a contrition, a devastation, an acknowledgement that what we have done and who we are is despicable and inexcusable and continual – but that in Jesus, in Jesus, there is forgiveness and new life so that we may go and sin no more. Jesus, I thank you that you fulfilled the promise of Genesis 3:15, that you came to take back all that our father lost. And Lord God, I thank you that you are the perfect heavenly Father. And God, I pray for my friends the gift of repentance, that cleansing, sweet, encouraging, life-giving gift of repentance. Amen.