

A Closer Relationship with God-Part 3
Motivated by the Fear of Being Phony
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For the sake of my kids, I am very grateful that the makers of Tylenol and Advil have perfected a good-tasting pain reliever. You can get it in grape, you can get it in cherry, now you can get it in strawberry, and they now even have, believe it or not, bubblegum-flavored Tylenol.

So for all my kids' bumps and bruises and all their childhood boo-boos, they don't seem to mind anymore when I go to the medicine cabinet and pull out one of their sugar-laden elixirs. They're okay with it. But I found that when they encounter a physical problem, an ailment that's a little more serious—when they have to be taken to the emergency room or at a doctor's visit—something there is just not right. I found that the doctors seem to have a little different solution.

As a matter of fact, I found that the more severe the problem, the more distasteful the solution. When my kid comes in and there's really something at stake, something really at stake in his health, he doesn't reach for some good-tasting syrup. He pulls out a syringe and a needle, much to the chagrin of my children and their mother.

The remedies in God's Word are much the same. Some weeks we can waft into church and we can have all of our spiritual bumps and bruises attended to. We can get patched up for another week of life and Christian living and can all be done with a fairly good-tasting sermon. But then, every now and then, we encounter texts in Scripture that are dealing with issues that are much more serious, much more profound, that deal with ailments that go much deeper. And unfortunately, those are sermons that are much harder to swallow.

Some well-meaning pastors, and I completely understand—I don't agree—but they seek to just avoid this unpleasant experience altogether. And they do that very creatively, and I envy them sometimes. And they pick brand new passages from all different parts of Scripture from week to week in their churches and strategically avoid these passages that deal with the sting of a scalpel or a syringe.

But the problem is, if you live on a diet of feel-good sermons, you might come to the conclusion that God can deal with every spiritual problem with bubblegum-flavored Tylenol. And He can't, and He hasn't, and He doesn't.

The Bible says our primary ailment is quite serious. It's terminal, actually. Good news is, in the book of Hebrews, as we've has a solution. The problem is any real or true or deep understanding of that solution leads us to see some themes that are a bit more graphic and distasteful than the average churchgoers used to. But when you resolve to attend a church that moves passage by passage through a book of the Bible and verse by verse, you end up hitting some of these head-on and you're forced to swallow some of these horse pill sermons, as I often call them.

So if you're visiting, you've visited on a great weekend because we've run smack dab into the middle of one of those texts. And if you have your Bibles, I want you to open once again for the 43rd time to the book of Hebrews. And I want you to open up to the 10th chapter.

And we left off in this text after seeing in verse 22 that our primary calling is once we get right with God to seek with all of our might to draw near to God. And then last week we saw in those great

and familiar verses in verses 24 and 25 that we need each other in that quest and that you and I ought to help each other in that quest, not just on Sundays, but we ought to be meeting more regularly. As a matter of fact, verse 25 ends, we ought to be doing it all the more as we see the day approaching, capital D, which brings him into another thought here.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this text is written for us to bring us to think about that day. And he says this beginning in verse 26, where our text for the morning begins. He says, if we deliberately keep on sinning, you know, after we've received the knowledge of the truth, we know what this thing is all about. We understand the purpose of the crucifixion. We get this thing called sin and its consequences. We know what this thing means if we are to be redeemed and forgiven. We get all that. We understand it. If we keep on deliberately sinning, then no sacrifice for sins is left. We don't have it. We're not a part of it. We don't get the benefits of it.

As a matter of fact, we're left, verse 27, with only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. He then makes an argument by comparison from lesser to greater. He says in verse 28, anyone in the Old Testament, if they rejected the law of Moses, they died. It was a capital offense to thumb your nose at the truth of the prophet. You died without mercy. No one cried over you. They said, man, he deserves it. If he's going to turn his back on the prophetic word, he should be killed. They were killed without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. It's all it took is two or three people to say, yes, he thumbs his nose at the truth of what God has revealed through Moses.

He says, if that's the way it was dealt with in the old covenant, how much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished? Who has—now again, this is all hinged on verse 26—a deliberate life of sin after knowing what this is all about. They are trampling the Son of God underfoot. They've treated as an unholy thing, like it was no big deal, the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, that quote-unquote set him apart. More on that later. And who has insulted the spirit of grace? Grace was all about the free forgiveness that comes in the shadow of the cross, that God will forgive you. You don't earn it. You get it granted to you. All of that, he says, is grace. But, you know, when you continue to deliberately sin after understanding this equation, you insult the Spirit, capital S, of grace.

For we know him who said—now quoting Deuteronomy 32—it is mine to avenge and I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge his people. We know him, don't we? If we do, you need to understand verse 31. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Those are verses that they don't choose very often for the day spring cards at the Christian bookstore. They're not the subscript after your Christian friend writes you on an email. These are hard words. They're serious words. They're words that speak to the depth of the sin problem. And it's there. These texts should not be dismissed. And just because of the modern self-imposed biblical censorship of a lot of Christian circles, it doesn't mean these aren't true. They're very true. And not only are they true because they're throughout the scriptures, they make perfect sense if we know anything about the problem of sin.

Because it's not just a cute Bible verse that we teach our children that the wages of sin is death. It has so much to do, not just with a coffin and a lifeless body. It has a lot to do with what happens to a person after their death when they have to meet an accountability called judgment before the living God. And that's a serious issue.



The Bible calls it the second death. The first death—you thought that was bad—the second death is having to account for your life and then having to pay in retribution and having to face God and to be paid back for the sins of your life. That's a terrible thing.

Now, salvation was all about removing the problem of sin. It was about taking the penalty of sin off my account. It was about somehow relating to a holy God and having that God embrace me, even though in my life I've sinned. How does that work? Well, that's what the book of Hebrews has been all about. Embrace Christ, our great high priest. And if you do because of his own sacrifice—not the animal, not the blood of a bull or a goat, but because of his own substitutionary sacrifice—you can be completely forgiven.

This passage brings us back to the core of that. It's not just about embracing the remedy for sin. It's about recognizing that when we embrace the remedy for sin, it changes everything about how we feel about sin and how we interact with sin and how we deal with sin in our lives.

And the text says, man, it gets back to the core issue. It's a sin issue. And we need to realize that that's a big deal.

If you found your worksheet, I'd like you to pull it out and just jot this down. If there's any flavor or feel that we get from the intention of this text, it's number one for us all to stop and just start to take sin seriously again. Because it's certainly being taken seriously in this text. Let's take it seriously. Let's understand that that's what the gospel is all about.

And not only is it about removing the consequences of sin, it's about God saying, now that I've removed the consequence from your life, you will no longer face the judgment in a place called the lake of fire. Now I want you to treat sin differently. And he doesn't leave us to our own devices to try and fight sin. He changes us internally.

And we teach our children this verse, don't we? 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17. You know it. You don't need to turn there, but at least jot it down because it fits well in this context. There should not be a continuation in deliberate sin. Why? Because if anyone is in Christ, remember this verse? He is a new creature, a new creation. The old, all that old stuff, it's gone. And the new, the new stuff, the new patterns of life, the new behaviors, the new appetites, the new desires, those things have come.

Does that mean that my life, the moment I trust in Christ, I don't ever sin again? No, obviously not. It's not what the text says. Matter of fact, that's not what Scripture teaches. But it does say there's a fundamental change in my life that begins a process of starting to say no to sin so that my life has a completely different relationship to sin after conversion than it did before.

Let me take you to a prime passage in the New Testament, 1 John 3. Just go to the end of the book, the book of Revelation, and turn back a few short books, and you'll find 1 John 3. And I want you to look at this and to get a big breadth of context here. So let's just start in verse 1. 1 John chapter 3. It is such an important text. It's one of those avoided texts of the New Testament. Not the first few verses, but the heart of the text.

Unfortunately, we don't hear much of this anymore. Because here's the problem with modern theology so often. We like to interpret biblical texts based on our experience. We don't like to interpret our experience based on the text. And that's an unfortunate turnaround in the modern Alice in Wonderland Christian community we often live in.

And we like to go to the text with preconceived notions about what I know and what I feel and what I've experienced. And we say, well, then that text can't really mean that. When in reality, God has called us to be good students of God's word who can rightly handle the word of truth. And then we say, my life must be submitted to that text. And if that's what the text means, and that's what it says, then it applies to me.

The first section of the text, we don't struggle too much with. Take a look at these familiar words when he says, how great, verse 1, is the love that the Father has lavished on us. Isn't that a great text? He just poured it out on us, that we should be called children of God, adopted a changed relationship to the living God. And that is what we are. John just revels in that. We are. We're children of the King.

The reason the world doesn't know us, the reason we're not fitting in very well down here, the reason there's persecution in the early church is, you know what, they didn't know him either. They crucified him.

Dear friends, now we are children of God. We have actually changed now. Now there's a whole eschatology that's going to come though, because what we will be, it hasn't been yet made known. We're not realized in the place of the new Jerusalem. We haven't been redeemed in our body, but our spirit has been redeemed. Our judicial standing before God has changed, and therefore we are children of God.

Now we haven't arrived, but look at this. It says we know that when he appears, now it's all going to be perfect. We will be like him, for we shall see him as he is. So what does that mean? We're unchanged? No, that doesn't mean that at all. As a matter of fact, verse 3, everyone who has this hope, who knows they will be perfect, standing in God's presence, not just with a redeemed heart, but a redeemed body, with no impulses for sin, with no temptation from the devil—you know, if that is our hope—you know what happens? If we have that hope in him, we purify ourselves just as he is pure. That's the process.

Justification is being called a child of God by God himself. You are now adopted into my family. Sanctification, this process of being set apart, is saying, I know that I am headed to a place of perfection, but now you've changed my heart. And because I'm hoping for that ultimate culmination of the Christian message, this place called the new Jerusalem, in the process, I am being purified. And I'm less like I was before I became a Christian this year than I was last year, because my life is changing. Because I have that hope, and therefore, I purify myself. My life is changing. It's getting and becoming more like Christ.

Then he says, let's talk about that. You want to talk about purity and sin? Everyone, verse 4, whose sins breaks the law. In fact, I mean, that's what sin is. It's lawlessness. It's breaking the rules. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our breaking of the rules, our sin. And by the way, the one we say we follow, there's no sin in him.

No one, verse 6, who lives in him, who says I'm a child of God, we follow Christ—no one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin, if their relationship to sin is unchanged, has either seen him or know him, known him. You don't. I mean, you're kidding yourself.

Dear children, don't let anyone lead you astray. Don't let anybody with some deceptive theology or some nice philosophy or some bumper sticker Bible truths confuse you. Don't let anyone lead you astray.

He who does what is right, okay, and the Greek has five tenses. We have three, past, present, and future. They have five in the ancient Greek language, *Koine* Greek, and one of them is a tense that speaks of a continual linear action. There's one that speaks of just a simple action, but there's one that speaks of a continuum, and that's the text chosen here by the Holy Spirit. If we do what is right, if it is a continuous action, it doesn't mean that we're sinless. Obviously, we're in the process of being purified according to verse 3, but if I do what is right, if that is the pattern of my life, if that's the new stuff that has come, then you know what? I am righteous. That means I am a child of God.

It who does what is sinful—he who continues, same tense, in that pattern of sin, who has a relationship with sin just like he had before he claimed to step into this relationship with God—well, you know what? He's really not a child of God. If you want to talk about his parental leadership, it's really not God. It's God's enemy, the diabolos, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. And can you see how that's much more broad than just the consequences of my sin? The devil's work is a work that he works in his, quote-unquote, children, if you will, if I'm of the devil. It's a pattern and lifestyle of sin. The Son of God didn't just come to change my relationship to the lake of fire. He came to change my relationship to daily acts of sin. He came to destroy the devil's work.

Look at verse 9. No one who is born of God will continue to sin. And it's not that he's left us to our own devices to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, though there's effort involved in living Christ-like. The Bible says you are going to be changed. Why? Because God's seed remains in him. He's changed you. His Holy Spirit is in you. Your heart is different. You are changed. And he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God. And that is a radical internal change.

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Anybody who's got a testimony or has walked the Nile or has been baptized in a church is a child of God. Is that what it says? Correct me now if I'm wrong. It doesn't say that, does it? No, he who does not do what is right is not a child of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother. We know the difference between them. We know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are, and it's based on what is your continuing relationship with sin. Is it different?

Now, here are a bunch of people sitting here in the first century receiving the letter to the Hebrews, and they're reading it in their worship, and they're saying, wow, you know what? I don't know where I stand in my relationship with sin.

Obviously, there were two parties in this church, and we've already seen the distinction drawn for us in chapter 6. Do you remember in chapter 6? We have two kinds of people sitting in church. They both look good. They both look Christian. They both sing the same Christian songs. They both claim to be followers of God, but there are some that are phony and counterfeit, and there are some that are real. And the distinction is drawn here with a clarity in chapter 10 of Hebrews, and that is what is your continuing relationship with sin? Is it changed or is it different?

Do you continue to deliberately sin the way you did prior to coming to Christ, or is something internally changed in you? Do you no longer continue in that pattern because God's seed abides in you, because, as 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, you're a new creation in Christ. Because, as 1 John 3 says, you've been born of God. Is that a different relationship that you have with sin?

Now, here's the problem. Back to Hebrews chapter 10. The problem is I'm preaching to a group that's a lot like that first century audience. It's a composite group. There are real Christians and there are phony Christians. And the writer of Hebrews, he starts to, if you read the whole book in one sitting, he starts to sound a bit schizophrenic. Because he's going back and forth with this great, incredible, boom, boom, boom, you guys need to get this right. And then he'll say, oh, but you know what, those of you that are—he's got this whole now different soft side. Oh, we've got a merciful high priest and he sympathizes with our weakness.

Hey, if you go on and continually deliberately sin, you know that you're not saved and you're gonna face God's judgment. Oh, but you know, we expect better things concerning you, things that accompany salvation. Remember those earlier days, that's where our passage is gonna go in verse 32. You remember those earlier days of devotion, and you remember how you started. What's the deal? The deal is that when you deal with issues this serious, you've got to recognize that you've got two groups in your audience.

And the same thing goes for us. There are two different groups here. And here's the problem. When I speak about your relationship to sin, because Christians cannot be sinless in this life, it's only a process of purification, every Christian here can think of sin in their life. And now I preach about continuing sin, and it freaks the real Christians out. Because you have a sensitive heart, because you know God, because His Spirit lives in you, and because you can think of sin that you've committed this week, and it freaks people out.

Please remember the rest of the book of Hebrews. As a matter of fact, I turn you to 10, but go back to 2 and chapter 5 and chapter 4. I mean, let's just at least look at chapter 2, verse 17. Remember that? That the high priest that we have is made like his brothers. That's verse 17 of chapter 2. At least circle it or mark it.

I'm speaking now to the real Christians. I don't want you to be paralyzed by this text. I want you to recognize that God recognizes that there is a continuation, a punctilious continuation of sin in our lives that hopefully is getting less and less as the years go by. But he recognizes the fact. He is a merciful high priest. Why? Because he walked in the shoes that we walked in.

For this reason, he, our great high priest, had to be made like his brothers. That's why God was made like us, not just to make atonement for sin, but that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. He's got to make atonement for sin, and you know what it does to him? He realizes the battle that you and I face with sin on a daily basis. He recognizes that.

Matter of fact, over to chapter 4, another classic text, he picks up the same theme again. After some stern words, he says this in verse 15. We don't have a high priest who's unable to—now underline these words, four words—to sympathize with our weakness. Sympathize with our weakness. You've got a God who knows that. He has been tempted, look at the next phrase, in every way, just like we are. Well, the difference is, of course, he's God, so he was without sin, he never gave in to

it, but you know what, when we fall into sin, Christians, if you're a real Christian here today, he sympathizes, he knows that. He knows the weakness of humanity. He recognizes that.

So for those of you that are real Christians here, I gotta be a bit schizophrenic, like the writer of Hebrews. You know what? Sin is gonna happen. The right thing to do, according to the first chapter of 1 John, is to confess our sins. If we claim to be without sin, we're just kidding ourselves, we're deceiving ourselves. But confess your sins. When you sin, be soft-hearted and turn. The right thing to do when Christians encounter sin is to turn to God, confess it. He's faithful and righteous to forgive our sins, cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But chapter 10, just like he did in chapter 2, just like he did in chapter 6, he says, but you know what? If your relationship with sin hasn't changed, if your pattern of sin is—look at the qualifying word, verse 26—deliberate. If there's deliberate sin in your life and you just don't take sin seriously, if you hide under some kind of banner like, you know, so many Christians seem to do these days, quote-unquote Christians seem to do these days, that, you know, it's all about God's grace.

And because it's all about God's grace, you can sin and it's okay. And you know you're forgiven because we got our ticket to heaven and it's okay. So not a big deal. I'm going to sin. It's all right. But when I'm done, I'm going to confess it. And I know God's. If you turn, as Jude said, the grace of our God into a license to sin, you don't understand grace and you are falling under the condemnation of verse 26 and 27, that you are continuing to deliberately sin.

And if that's the case, you ought to be afraid. You ought to be afraid. As a matter of fact, you ought to know that you do not participate in the benefits of the cross. All you have left is a fearful expectation of judgment. You ought to be afraid of the fact that you will have to face retribution from a holy God one day.

Can you see this composite creates in the preacher? You know what, if you stumble this way, it's okay. You know what, God is a gracious God. Confess it, repent. Hey, you know what, if you continue to sin and your whole attitude about it hasn't changed, you ought to be afraid because you're going to face the judgment of God. You're not even saved.

Well, we're still talking about the same topic. Sin. The difference is some people don't take it seriously and some people take it really serious. And those who take it serious show that they do not deliberately sin. They're dragged into sin. They stumble into sin. They don't say, yeah, you know what? It's all right. It's all about grace. It's not about law. It's not about law. It's okay. And even if it is sin, it doesn't matter. God will forgive me.

That is an abuse of grace. It shows you don't understand grace. And as later he says, it's like trampling the blood of the Son of God under your feet and saying, I don't care. It's not a big deal. It's a big deal. Sin is a big deal. And we ought to take it seriously. We ought to recognize how important it is. We ought to deal severely with it.

Matthew 5:29. You remember that text? 29, 30. He repeats it again in chapter 18. He says, if your eye causes you to sin, you know what? It's okay. God's forgiving. Doesn't matter. Don't worry about it. If your hand causes you to sin doesn't matter. He repeats it in chapter 18. If your hand or your foot is an avenue through which sin comes, he says cut it off and toss it from you.



Can you imagine that graphic picture? Sever your hand and take it and throw it into the vacant lot on your way out. Wow. What are you talking about? What are you trying to say to us? Take sin seriously.

Those who don't prove they're not saved, which is the very next thing he says in verse 30 of Matthew 5. He says that. He says it'd be better for you to enter life and to show up with a stub on the end of your arm than to be cast into hell with a complete and whole body. You know, it'd be better for you.

What's the difference? People that take sin seriously and people that don't. Do you think there are people that go to church, Bible teaching churches that don't take sin seriously? Absolutely. There's all kinds. And the difference is the proof of a changed heart. If you don't take sin seriously, you're not saved. And all you have left to worry about is the day that you face the living God and he casts you into a place called the lake of fire. I didn't write it. That's what it says. The fire that will consume the enemies of God. God calls you his enemy if you don't take sin seriously.

Take sin seriously. It is the core and crux that proves the genuine reality of our conversion. If you don't have that, you're not saved.

So be paralyzed? No, I didn't say that. If we take sin seriously, we'll be quick to repent. We'll be soft-hearted. We'll do as Jesus said. We'll deal severely with the avenues through which sin comes.

Verse 28. Back to Hebrews chapter 10. The comparison is made of the law of Moses. Moses was considered in the book of Hebrews and, of course, in the Old Testament as the greatest prophet, right? Bar none except, of course, in the new covenant, Jesus Christ. He's the great prophet. He is the one who met with God face to face. He was the one that God treated like, you know, hey, let's talk. And if you gave Moses a hard time, you know, you're in big trouble. Just ask Aaron and Miriam. You don't, I mean, Moses is the guy. And people that highly valued the prophet's message, Moses' message, he said if they took that message and thumbed their nose at it and said, I don't really care, I'm going to do whatever I want, they were taken out to the edge of town and they were stoned to death. They were cut off from their people.

Let me give you one example. Go to the book of Numbers with me real quick. The book of Numbers. And I think it's important to go to Numbers chapter 15 because, again, it reemphasizes the distinction. And perhaps it will be a comfort to the real Christians here who say, wow, I'm thinking of the sin that I committed yesterday or last night or maybe even this morning and I'm freaking out, maybe I'm not saved.

If you're freaking out about your sin, that's good. See, that probably proves that you are saved. And it probably, if you analyze that sin, you'll probably see how you were dragged into that sin, not as an excuse, but as a true objective analysis. And now that you recognize that you are in sin, you want to repudiate it, you want to repent of it, and you want to move forward.

That's exactly what's addressed in verse number 27. He calls it unintentional sin. Numbers chapter 15, verse 27, if one person sins unintentionally, he must bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering and the priestess to make an atonement before Yahweh for the one who has erred in sinning unintentionally. He didn't plan it. He didn't map it out. This happened. And when atonement has been made for him, he will be forgiven.

One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether he's native-born and Israelite, I don't care what his pedigree is, or whether he was an alien living among you, doesn't matter, he will be forgiven.

But, verse 30, are you with me? Anyone who sins defiantly. I love the Hebrew idiom. It's worth writing in the margin. Here's the phrase in Hebrew. With a high-lifted hand. With a hand lifted high. With a hand up in the air. And there's a few ways and a few reasons people would do that. One was to take an oath. I'm going out and I'm doing it. That's what I'm going to do. It's like calling attention, saying, that's what my heart's going to do, and I'm in. And I'm planning it, and I'm going for it.

With a hand lift and high. NIV translators translate that Hebrew idiom with a defiance. They sin defiantly. With an oath, with pomp, with a bead of the chest. This is the way I'm going to do it. Whether they're native-born or alien, I don't care what their pedigree is, they blaspheme Yahweh.

That person must be cut off from his people, which doesn't mean we kind of put a, you know, no longer in service on his mailbox or whatever. This means we take him to the edge of town, and on the testimony of two or three people that saw him pompously and defiantly sin, they start throwing the big rocks, and he's executed as a capital offense.

Why? Verse 31, because he despised Yahweh's word. Who did that come through? What was his name? Moses. And broke his commands. That person must surely be cut off, and look at this, he doesn't get forgiveness. His guilt remains on him.

The distinction again. And the point is the difference of how I value the word of God that comes in the Old Testament case through the prophet Moses in the first five books of the Old Testament. And the Bible says if that's the way it was treated then how much more should we because of our respect not for Moses but because of something greater than Moses which was the whole point of the early part of Hebrews, Jesus Christ.

That Christ didn't just get up and speak for God. He died in our place. How much more will we be guilty? Back to Hebrews 10. How much more does that man deserve to be punished? Who has, now look at the bottom of verse 29. Look at the words here. It's like he's trampling the Son of God underfoot. It's like he's treating as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that, quote unquote, sanctified him. And he was insulted, the spirit of grace.

Number two on your outline, the whole emphasis here is, you know, they respected Moses and his word. Now, the writer of Hebrews is saying, what about our respect for the love of Christ that was demonstrated in a cross? How highly do we value that? Does that change our relationship to sin? Let's just put it down this way. Number two, you and I need to learn to highly value the love of Christ, which you might want to put next to that, was demonstrated in the death of Christ, right?

Remember that childhood, Sunday school, you know? What is it? A wanna verse, Romans 5:8. That he demonstrated his love toward us. How? In that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What did Jesus say in the book of John? No greater love does any man have than this, that a man would lay down his life for a friend. Romans 5 says the same thing. Oh, someone, they might die maybe for a righteous, famous person, maybe. But Christ's love was so incredible, he looked at sinful people who defied his laws and he died for them.



And if he did that for you, how much do you value that? Does it change your relationship with sin? Or are you still willing to say, well, you know, grace of God, whatever, you know, it's okay, I'll get forgiven on the other side. You ought to change our relationship with sin. Why? Because I've learned to value the death of Christ.

I wonder how hard we'd work. Maybe you got a few, a free coupon that somebody came out and handed you at the Chevron station. They said, hey, here's a free coupon. Put this code in and you can drive through the little, you know, the car wash here for free. Let's say you did that and you know what those are like. Your windows get all spotted and, you know, it's sometimes worse than if you didn't get your car washed. But you go through the little Chevron drive-through car wash.

I wonder, based on that, a free car wash, and it's not all that great, I wonder how hard you'd work this week to not park under that tree at the office or drive through that broken sprinkler a main that's shooting up in the middle medium of the highway. I wonder how hard you'd work to keep your car clean if you got a free car wash on the way home from church. I don't know. Not that much.

But let's say that your children, you got young kids, maybe like me, they get allowance. Maybe they saved up their allowance for an entire year. And all three of your kids, like my kids, they all came and they said, Dad, we love you so much. And you know what we've done? I know you didn't know this, but we've been saving our money. This is really fanciful illustration. We've been saving our money, Dad. And what we did is we saved up \$200.

And last night, when you weren't looking, Mom allowed us to have a detailer, the best detailer in all of Orange County, and he charges \$200. And we spent the last two years of our saved up allowance, and we got your car completely detailed. They washed it. They waxed it. They buffed it out. Man, it's as clean as your car has ever been. It's cleaner than the day you bought it, Dad.

Now, if I drove off this week, I wonder how hard I would work to keep my car clean. If every time I look through that pristine windshield, I remembered that my kids spent their entire savings to have this thing detailed, would I try to avoid the mud puddle in the road that's there at that little wash at the front of the parking lot? I think I would.

Would I park under that tree that gives me that nice surprise in the afternoons? No. I'd probably find another place to park. I might even go and buy a car cover to try and cover that thing up, right? You know those crazy people that do that, some of you here, right? Cover your cars, because you can't let get dust get on it. I might even do that if I knew that my kid saved up for a whole year to get my car cleaned.

I wonder how hard we would work to keep our lives clean this week, if we really understood what a great cost God, the God of the universe, went to in having his own son crucified and beaten by thugs, Roman soldiers, having nails, what constituted nails, driven into his head, those thorns from ancient Palestine that are as hard as nails, driven into his head, pummeled so that he wasn't even recognizable, the prophetic Old Testament word said, having his beard pulled out, the Messianic Psalms say.

I wonder how hard we'd work to keep our life clean if we knew because of that death, our lives were washed and cleansed and before the Father now, our lives were clean. And now as Christians,



having embraced the solution for our sins, we are now clean before the Father and God hands us a new clean life.

I wonder how hard we'd work to try and make sure that we don't sin if we really knew what it cost to clean us up. I think we'd work a little harder than most of us work now. And all it is, is a change in perspective. It's a change in perspective in knowing, wow, forgiveness, it was expensive. It cost the Son of God his life.

And when we sin defiantly, look at the description. It's like we're trampling the corpse of the Son of God. We're just walking over it after the Roman soldiers pull it off that execution beam. It's like we're just saying, hey, I'm going to go over here and sin. Hey, excuse me, walking on the corpse of Christ.

It's like the blood that spilt out and down the posts of the cross. It's like we're like, oh, yeah, no big deal. Kind of can't get that blood off there, would you? Can you clean that thing up? It's like we're treating it unholy. And you know what? The spirit of grace, because it was all about grace, thinks of that he is insulted if we don't take sin seriously.

And you know what it means? Valuing the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. That that was costly. My forgiveness cost a lot.

There's that little phrase, just a little excursus here, that sanctified him. What does sanctification mean? What does sanctified mean? I mean, if you get down to the core of the word, the Greek word is the same as the words translated holy. What does holy mean, to be sanctified or holy? What does that mean? To be set apart.

Now, we know that if you're thinking to be set apart in the sense that I am judicially no longer a child of the devil, if you will, as 1 John 3 intimated, but I am now a child of God. If we're talking about that kind of setting apart, we can't be talking about that because we know where these people end up, verse 27. And we know what they're doing. They're saying that the Son of God is not all that important. So we can't mean that.

And much like a lot of words, we can define them with a capital S or a small S. And we know, according to Hebrews chapter 6, that there's a lot of small S sanctification going on in the lives of people who attend the church that this letter was written to. They are set apart. What does that mean? They're no longer a part of their old circles. They got new friends now at church. They sit and benefit from the preaching of the word. They put things into action and principles in their lives, and their lives are different now. Man, they sure are different. They're doing different things.

Oh, they're really not converted. And here's people saying, I'm a Christian. I stand with that group. I'm set apart with them. I'm a part of the church, the ecclesia, the called out ones. I'm over here with you guys. If you are set apart, you know, and you're fellowshiping with us, the question is, how do you treat the thing that really sets us apart, capital S?

Well, if you treat it like, well, you know, I know he came to destroy the works of the devil. He came to change my relationship with sin. But, you know, I kind of like sin, and it's okay. And isn't it all about grace anyway? Well, you're treating the blood of Christ as an unholy thing.



We need to learn to highly value the love of Christ. And I know we've been all introverted and it's all about us and I realize that but let's turn the eyeball out for a minute okay. That's a motivation to police my life and it's a motivation I hope to police your life but just turn your eyeballs out for just a second and you look at this picture and here's the writer of Hebrews saying it's like you're trampling the son of God underfoot it's like you're treating as unholy the blood this precious blood of the innocent one it's like you're saying it doesn't even really matter.

And I'm looking at that and I'm thinking there is a real passion in the pen of this writer, is there not? I mean, he's passionate about it. He's defensive here.

And I think about the fact that there are men in this audience right now who would probably go to fist blows with other men if their wife was insulted in the parking lot. If somebody deliberately sinned against them, I think there are men that would physically fight other people in standing up for the honor of their wife.

I think there's some moms here that would pull some hair and yell and scream and kick and yell and raise their voice and scratch a few people in the face, if the honor of their children was in some way defied or someone walked over their body like they didn't care, I think they would look at their kids and say, I love my kids so much. If you walked on him and deliberately sinned against him, I would physically go after you. I think there's women here that would do that.

So what's wrong with us, Christian, when we watch people do the same thing to the Son of God, and we watch them because of their defiance, and they call themselves Christians, and they say, oh yeah, I'm set apart too, I'm in your group too, and they sin against the Holy One. What is our risk? Well, you know, I don't want to get involved, and who am I? I'm not the Holy Spirit, and I don't want them to think I'm a holy Jesus nut, and you know, I don't know, I'll just kill you, God will take care of it.

Is that the way you deal with it when your wife is insulted and deliberately sinned against? Moms, is that how you deal with it if your kid gets trampled purposefully by some thug? I don't think so. I think you get upset about that.

How is it that we are so benign when it comes to watching people make a mockery of the atonement? How come we can sit by and say, you know, let's just, you know, I'm not the Holy Spirit. How does that work? I don't understand that.

And you know what? The sin in context is really not, I mean, so far we are not speaking here of some graphic and incredible, you know, morbid immorality. Look at the last sin that we've been dealing with. Verse number 25, let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing.

The last command on order in the text is people that say, I don't really have time for church. You know, oh, Christ died for you, huh? You're receiving the benefits of the atonement when Christ went to the cross and got beaten in the face for you and you don't have time for church. Well, I'm so sorry you don't have time for it. Oh, your kid's got soccer? Oh, I'm sorry. Well, then you can't come and worship God on the weekends.

And I heard it just yesterday from another person who said, well, you know, we haven't been to church for months because, you know, we just can't and we just don't go. It's too busy. And I'm

thinking to myself, how come I don't get upset about that like I would if someone trampled my wife's reputation under their feet? You're making a mockery of Christ. Christ said go to church.

He not only that, if the Bible says that you should turn parts of your recreational appetites off because it's sinful and a disgrace to God, turn it off. Say no to, well, you know, I just like it. It's not so bad. And even if it is sin, God will forgive me. You're making a mockery of the atonement. He died to free you from that stuff. Stop it.

And how is it that we can watch people do it and say, well, I'm a Christian too. And they headlong into sin and we go, you know, what can I do? What can you do? I think you can be a bit of a lover of Christ who has a little bit of concern for the honor and dignity of the cross and say, that's unacceptable. It makes me angry. And you're wrong to do it. I mean, not so much as a measured word of correction comes from the mouth of the average Christian today.

And I think it's because we do not value the love of God. He died for us to redeem us from sin. We watch people sin who claim to be Christians, and we stand by and say, well, you know, let's learn to highly value the love of Christ.

Why? Well, verse 30. Composite group, two quotations. Got real Christians in the audience, you got phony Christians in the audience. Two quotations. Quotations, interestingly enough, and maybe your footnote will say this in your Bible, it comes from Deuteronomy chapter 32, and they are sequential verses. It's the first part of verse 35 and the first part of verse 36 in Deuteronomy chapter 32.

And the first verse that starts it here says it is mine to avenge and I will repay. Then there's another Hebrew phrase and then it says in the next verse the Lord will judge his people.

Do you see that there are two audiences in view here? You would you can take my word for you go home and study it be good Bereans. But in that text the first verse is dealing with the enemies of Israel. God will judge the enemies of Israel. He'll judge the enemies, absolutely. And God will repay them.

And then the next verse turns attention to Israel. And you know what? The Lord will judge His people too. There will be accountability there. Oh, there will be extreme accountability to the enemies of God. They will be punished with God's retribution. And then there will be accountability for the house of Israel. And the Father, who calls Himself the Father and Helper of Israel, guess what? He is concerned about how Israel lives and He will judge His people.

There are two judgments in view here. A judgment that involves punishment and a judgment that involves discipline and accountability. There's a judgment to the enemies of God that involves something that he describes in verse 27 as the raging fire that consumes the enemies of God. And then there's a judgment that involves the people of God.

Why should I care about sin in my life? Well, if I don't, I'm going to have to face the judgment of God retribution. And if I am a Christian and I struggle with sin like you do, and it frustrates me, and I'm angry about it, and I repent of it, and I'm getting a little bit more holy than I was last year, and things are getting a little better here, but I still am grappling with this, and then I see others trample the blood of the Son of God underfoot because they don't care. Why should I care about that? Well,



one reason is because I'm going to stand before God and be judged. Different kind of judgment? Absolutely.

And in the Bible, here's a little helpful note. We need to recognize the difference when we see the word judgment, because the word in the New Testament, for instance, the word *krino*, is used in both cases, the judgment of God's enemy in a place called the lake of fire, and the judgment of God's people giving account for our lives. Christians will be judged. Non-Christians will be judged. They're a different kind of judgment.

And as I often say, there's a judgment that takes place at the Orange County Courthouse that's a little different than the judgment that takes place at the Orange County Fair. There are two different kinds of judgment, but there's a judgment there, and they both, there's an evaluation. One is for punishment, one is for reward, but also more than that, and it's not, the county fair is not a good analogy here.

There will be an answering and an accountability and giving an account for every idle and careless word I will have to answer to my father. The Bible says, if you call on God, your father, one who impartially judges, then you ought to live your lives with fear. You ought to have that sense of respectful dread. As Spurgeon said, holy anxiety.

You need to recognize that this text, I mean, this isn't going to take any convincing, but from 26 to 31, it's not going to, the reason it's not on a day spring card, it's not intended to leave me with a good feeling. Would you agree with that? This whole text for Christians and non-Christians is going to leave me with a feeling of uneasiness.

Let me introduce another word. The word in Scripture that describes an inner sense of uneasiness is the word fear, *phobos*. We get the word phobia of it. If you stand on a ladder, up high on a ladder, and you have a fear of height, then you feel inside uneasiness. It's not a pleasant feeling, right? That's an unpleasant feeling.

If you stand before a judge and you've broken the law and he's about to decide how long you spend in the county jail, you have an uneasy feeling in your heart.

You need to understand just how judgment has two applications in Scripture. *Krino*, so the word *phobos*, *phobos* in Scripture, has two applications in Scripture. The non-Christian should fear. What do they have to fear? Well, according to verse 27, the judgment of God. Which judgment? The raging fire that consumes the enemies of God.

But you and I, according to verse number 30, we have a judgment to face. The Lord's people have a judgment to face, and that should also result in fear, a different kind of fear.

Therefore, let's sum up our message this way. Number three on your outlines. We are called in drawing near to God, verse 22, to love him, but in loving him, we are also to fear him. And this passage hits the nail right on the head. It leaves every reader with the sense of, it's called, in verse 31, dread. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And you Greek students that are here, and some of you, I watch you bring your Greek New Testament. Look at verse 31. What Greek word is right there translated dreadful in our English

language? The word *phobos*. It's the word fear. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. A fearful thing.

What does that mean? Well, I suppose for non-Christians, it's a really fearful thing because they're going to be punished. But you know what? For us, it's a fearful thing as well because there will be an accountability.

When I was 16, if I were to come home late after curfew, I would fear my father. And you know what that would be? An internal feeling of uneasiness, particularly if when I drove into the driveway, the bedroom light came on. Boom. Okay? That was at age 16.

At age 18, I was living in downtown Chicago. I worked on Michigan Avenue selling shoes. I would walk home from Michigan Avenue to the college dorm that was about a mile away. And you know, when I came home late after work, I had a different kind of fear. But I was fearful of the street gangs in downtown Chicago. Right next to Cabrini Green, thankfully, my dorm room was. I was afraid. Both of them were feelings of uneasiness.

One is a feeling that when it comes to God, God doesn't want me to have. When John says, perfect love casts out all fear, he clarifies the fear I'm talking about is the fear of punishment. I am not going to be, in the technical sense, punished by God. But when I came home late from my curfew, I might receive, to be technically accurate, discipline. My dad didn't bring me into the garage and beat me to get back at me. That's what punishment is. It's retribution. It's leveling the score. It's justice.

My father didn't want to instill justice in my life when I came home late as a 16-year-old. He wanted to instill, what, discipline so that I might learn to do what is right. But you know what? It caused in my heart, nevertheless, when the light came on and I drove in with my loud car, hoping to cruise in, turning it off about three houses before I drove up, I was trying to make sure that I didn't have to feel that because I wanted to sneak one by him. But here was someone who, light comes, oh man. Oh, busted. Okay? Fear.

And I know some of you didn't grow up with a dad like that because you came and went whenever you pleased. And I feel sorry for you because you don't understand the God of heaven because the God of heaven is not some libertarian who lets you do whatever you want. Our God, as we'll learn in chapter 12, is a God who cares enough to discipline us.

And I praise God I had a dad that cared enough about me to discipline me. And those of you that know what that's like, you understand God a little bit better than those in this modern age of lax rules and foolish, stupid parenting. Unfortunately, a lot of Christians don't understand that. And they think, well, if God is my father, then I don't fear him. Well, that's not true. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that we are to fear him. To put it in two words in the book of Peter, fear God. It's very simple. Fear God. That's what Peter says.

Not only that, the Apostle Paul says, if you're now a Christian and you've embraced the remedy for sin as it relates to being obedient and saying no to sin in your Christian life, here's what he says, be obedient, children. Not just in my presence. Be obedient, children, all the time. And you're proving to be.



And he says, you know what? You are to, this is Philippians 2:12, you are to work out your salvation with, you know the verse? Fear and, just in case you didn't get what kind of uneasy feeling that is, and trembling. And people that want to call it respect, okay, I guess so, but it's the kind of respect that leads you to tremble. And that's when the light comes on late at night. That's a trembling fear.

God expects you to fear him.

And let me just say this. Let me turn to you a couple quick passages. Let me turn to the book of Acts. And let me just get corporate here in terms of our church. If God's spirit gets a hold of Compass Bible Church, if God is really active in presence here, we as a church will fear God. We will tremble when we think of him.

Look at this text, if you would, in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 9. Acts chapter 9. It is God's intention for every church.

If you can go to church week after week, and all it is is bubble gum Tylenol every week, and you never get a sense of dread before the living God. If you never leave going, whoa, our God is a consuming fire, which is where he goes, by the way, in the book of Hebrews. He says that. We approach him, we worship him with reverence. Guess what that word is, *phobos*. With fear and awe because our God is a consuming fire. That's how we worship him, with respect. That's so respectful that it causes me to tremble.

And you know what? It is God's intention for every church if the Holy Spirit has his way, that we will do so. Take a look at verse number 31 as he summarizes the trip strengthening the churches. He says, then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. Now, that's an important contextual marker because there wasn't persecution going on at this particular point. This description is a time of peace.

And a lot of people think, well, if we get in the tax breaks and the government's not persecuting us and it's a time of peace and prosperity, then you know what? Our relationship with God is fun and joyful and relaxing and it's cool and it's high-five Jesus in heaven. It's all great. And that's not what works out here.

Time of peace. We're not talking about a time of persecution. A time of peace. It was strengthened and encouraged, not by Paul, ultimately by the Holy Spirit. And here's what the Holy Spirit does. A couple things. It says the churches, they grew in number and they were living in the, circle it, *Phobos*, the fear of God.

God, if he has his way with Compass Bible Church, or any other church listening to this on the radio or watching it on television, it will cause your church to stand in fear of God. Can you love God and fear God? You must, because we're called to love him, and we're also called to fear him.

One last passage. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians. Make it 2 Corinthians 7. 2 Corinthians 7. 2 Corinthians 7, after this great instruction in chapter 6 about why aren't we different? Why don't we step out? Why don't we live for God? Why don't we live obediently? Why don't we take sin seriously? He says this. I mean, God wants to be intimate with us. We draw near to him, he'll draw near to us.

All these great promises, all the things that were intimated in chapter 6, he says, since we have, verse 1, 2 Corinthians 7:1, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us, now look at this, purify ourselves. That's a kind of I've exerted effort to change my relationship with sin. Purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit. Let's be holy people. Perfecting, I love this phrase, holiness. Are you working on that? Perfecting holiness out of, what does your Bible say? Guess what the word is? *Phobos*. Out of fear for God. Let's do that. Because we fear him.

Lewis was on to something in the Chronicles of Narnia, and you know the story, and thankfully, it was popularized by the movie, but the book was far better. And if you read the book, you remember that last paragraph in that chapter, dealing with that conversation that Lucy has with Mr. Beaver about Aslan.

And she's frustrated because she said, I expected that the king would be a man. Oh, he's not a man, Mr. Beaver says. He's a lion. He's a great lion. Wow. Sounds scary. Remember the whole dialogue there? She says, oh, he doesn't sound very safe. And Mr. Beaver said, who said anything about safe? Oh, you mean he's not safe? No, he's not. Who said anything about safe? He said he's not safe, but he's good.

And the combination of drawing near to a good God should leave us, as Lewis tried to teach us through the words of Mr. Beaver, because here's what he says. He says this, and I love this phrase. He says, if anyone can stand before the great Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or they're just plain silly.

And the problem with people today in church is that I don't think we've got people that are braver than most who can stand in the face of a holy God. I think we've got a lot of silly people who think that God is their butler, he's their therapist, and we don't stand in awe of a great and awesome God who says, I spent the blood of my son to forgive you of sin. Can you change your relationship to it? Can you work to perfect holiness in your life? Work at it. And when you see people claiming to be Christians and they just trample over the blood of Christ? Could you stand up for the honor of my son's death?

Fear God. Fear God.

If that leads us to a little doubting, if that leads us to a little self-examination, let me close with the words of Spurgeon. He said, I would rather go to heaven doubting all the way than to be lost through deceptive self-confidence. There is a holy fear, Spurgeon said, that must not be banished from the church of God. There is a sacred anxiety, I love that phrase, which puts us to question. It forces us to examine ourselves to see if we're of the faith. And that fear must not be disdained.

Let us learn, if the Holy Spirit gets a hold of our church, to stand in awe and reverence for the Holy God. Let's pray.

God, we need your help. We need your spirit to work in our lives. We need our hearts to get a clearer and more accurate biblical picture of who you are.

We praise you, God. It's of no genius of our own. It's your work in our church. But we do praise you that we have chosen to move passage by passage through the book of Hebrews. We're not skipping around because certainly if we were and we're trying to preach pleasant and good-tasting



messages, we would certainly skip this text. But we can't if we're committed to preaching and teaching, learning and living the whole counsel of God.

So, Father, we're here. We're grateful for encountering the text for an unpleasant 45 minutes. But we are thankful, God, for what it can do in our hearts. And while many of us think it will just drive the visitors away, we're thankful for the reminder in Acts chapter 9 that when the Holy Spirit is involved, it grows in numbers and we live in the fear of God.

So help us, Lord, to have a proper respect, a kind of respect that is so intense that when we stand before you, our knees knock just a little bit. And we recognize that you're a great God, an awesome God, a consuming fire. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And we know that the enemies, the counterfeits, will face you in judgment. And we know that when we drive our lives into the driveway of the kingdom, the light will come on and you will walk out and examine our lives. And for that, God, we just look to that day with a bit of holy anxiety, as Spurgeon put it. And we want to be careful and circumspect and questioning and looking into our lives with a bit more precision than the kind of folly and silliness that so often captivates modern Christianity.

Help us, God, lead us to another level of understanding of who you are and another level of being in step with the Holy Spirit and living up to the high calling to which you've called us, to be holy as you're holy.

God, we know we're in process. We know it's a process of purification. We can't just snap our fingers or you just don't do some miraculous work that makes us never sin again. It's a battle until the day we reach the kingdom. But between now and then, God, we want to do our best. We want to be encouraging one another and all the more as we see the day of driving our lives into your presence approaching.

God, we want to encourage each other. We want to help each other. So God, I pray that that would be the reality. And ultimately, we'd find ourselves day after day, week after week, and year after year, drawing nearer and nearer to you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.