

What Is the Gospel? - Part 1

by Paul Washer

The gospel is the message of Christianity, the power of God and the motivation of God for the Christian life, which reveals the love of God and motivates us to live for God.

Duration: 58:00

Scripture: Romans 3:23-29

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of guarding our thoughts and the consequences of our actions. He highlights the decline of morality and the increasing prevalence of immorality and violence in society. The speaker also discusses the significance of God's law and how it is often viewed as restrictive and oppressive. He challenges a student's perspective on the law by asking for a specific example of a law that hinders personal freedom. The sermon concludes with an illustration of the potential embarrassment and shame if our thoughts were exposed to others.

Transcript

Now, I have been asked to share with you the gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is a great privilege. Why? Because literally, there is no greater message in the world, in human history, there is no greater message even in the Bible than the gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, you must understand that the gospel is not just the power of God unto salvation, but it is the power of God and the motivation of God for the Christian life.

Why should a person come to God? Well, because God so loved the world, he gave his only son, and his son died on a tree that that person's sins might be paid for, and that person might have everlasting life. Why should a person live for God? For the same reason, because God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son. You see, the controlling factor in our lives is what God has done for us in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, the apostle Paul said that he was constrained. What does he mean by that? That he was, he was, you could say, maybe restricted from doing some things, that he was forced or pushed to do other things. What does he mean? It means that he saw the love of God as so great when manifested in the gospel of Jesus Christ that it compelled him to live for God, to turn away from evil.

And to walk according to the commandments of God, there is a sense that I stand here today in front of you in chains. Now, I know that you can't see any chains and I'm not in prison, but the chains are real. What are they? They're the chains of the love of God.

Many, many years ago, when I was when I was your age, I did not know God, did not believe in God, claimed to be something of an agnostic. Someone shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with me, and the spirit of God was working. And I heard what that person said, and my heart was warmed.

I began to realize how much God loved me. That message compelled me not only to believe, but it changed my entire life, everything about me. Now, even though I fail so often and it brings great sadness to my heart, I can tell you that my chief desire is to live according to what God has done for me in Christ.

As Christ gave himself for me, I desire to give myself for Christ. And the more I understand what Christ has done for me, the better I am able to give myself to him and the more I am motivated to give myself to him. So what I want you to see is this.

That the gospel is not some introductory message to Christianity, it is the message of Christianity, though you study the gospel all your life, you will not be able to exhaust its glories and its beauty. As a matter of fact, you could spend an eternity in heaven itself. And at the end of eternity, if we could say such a thing, you will still not have fully comprehended all that God has done for you in the person and the work of his son.

Now, as I have said, I've I've been asked to come here in order to preach to you the gospel. And since my time is limited, I'm going to go to what I believe is the most important text in the Bible with regard to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it's found in the book of Romans, the book of Romans chapter three. The book of Romans chapter three and verse twenty three.

And we're going to read the entire passage together. So let's go there. Romans three, twenty three.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness because in the forbearance of God, he passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of his righteousness at the present time so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus, where then is boasting it is excluded by what kind of law of works? No, no, not at all, but by a law of faith. Let's go the Lord in prayer.

Father, I come before you in the name of your son. And I ask for help. Lord, the gospel message, it is so great, so marvelous that the preacher cannot comprehend it fully.

And cannot communicate even what he knows. Without your help. So, Lord, please help us help me to preach, help the hearers to hear.

And most of all, Lord, help us to apply these things to our life, transform us through these truths. And father, I ask all this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Many great preachers down through the history of the church, for example, Charles Spurgeon, Martin Lloyd-Jones, they referred to this text that I just read as the Acropolis, our fortified city of the Christian faith. I've heard some men even say that if if they had to lose all the Bible and were allowed to keep only one passage, this is the passage they would keep. I myself have preached this text more times than than I

could ever remember over the years of my ministry.

As a matter of fact, sometimes people ask me, it seems like the only thing you ever preach is this text. And in a way, that's true. This is one of at least, if not the most important passage in the Bible, and it is often so misunderstood.

One of the reasons why the church today is so weak and why many believers are so weak is they do not understand the gospel. They have a very, very superficial view of the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you look at many of the tracks that are written today, you see things like, you know, a few spiritual laws or five things that God wants you to know or how to have a happy life.

And in that you will see maybe a few truths, but very often you do not see in those tracks the true gospel. When we look at the pulpits today, preachers preach about so many things and oftentimes completely ignore the gospel of Jesus Christ. Or if they preach about the gospel of Jesus Christ, they preach something rather superficial.

They've reduced it all down to a few little propositions. And if you say you believe them, then you're OK with God. Well, we don't want to do that here.

Today, we want to go through this gospel message with a fine tooth comb. We want to truly see what is the gospel of Jesus Christ so that we can glory in it because it's through the gospel that we are saved. Now, let's go back to our first verse, Romans chapter three, verse twenty three.

He says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God now, all have sinned, the word sin here means to fall short or to miss the mark. Imagine for a moment that you had a target with a bullseye in the center and you had a bow and arrow and you were standing about 30 or 40 yards back and you pull back the bow with all your might, you release the arrow and not only do you not hit the bullseye, you don't even hit the target. Maybe you you've gone to the right or you've gone to the left or you shot over or you didn't even reach the target itself.

That's kind of what it means here when it says that all have sinned. The fact is that God has revealed his righteous law to us. He has told us, shown us his will and none of us have obeyed it.

We can look at it another way. Imagine that the law of God is a standard by which we compare everything else. God has revealed his will to us through his law.

But the Bible says that every one of us has gone his own way instead of following the law of God, we have turned devised other ways of living. Now, if we look at sin just from that perspective, sin looks more like a mistake or an error on our part. But what we have to see is that sin is much more than that.

Sin is horrible. As a matter of fact, there is no way that the human mind or the human language could comprehend or communicate just how terrible, how wicked, how vile that sin truly is. Now, you may ask the question, why is sin so bad? Because of the goodness of the God against whom it was committed, that's why it's so bad.

You see, when you sin, you are not sinning against just, you know, some some mayor of a small town. Or some fallible man, you are sinning against the God of glory, the creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of the universe, and one who is impeccable, one who is without sin, one who is all good, holy and righteous. You're sinning against a God who is infinitely, absolutely deserving of all your obedience, all your honor.

And all your service, let me let me give you maybe an illustration that will help you understand just how wicked sin is and what an offense it is to God, let's just try to picture in our minds for a moment the days of creation. And there, if we can say such a thing there, God is standing and he commands stars to put themselves in different places in the universe. And all those stars obey him.

Stars that are so large that they could swallow up our sun many times over things so powerful. And yet they all put themselves in the exact place that God has designed. Now, God looks at the planets and he tells all of them to move in certain orbits and they all obey him precisely, even though the distance of their orbits is so vast, we can't even calculate it.

They do not stray even an inch from what God has commanded. Now, imagine that God commands the valleys to be cast down and they obey him. He commands the mountains to be raised up and they all obey his voice.

God looks at the great seas and the oceans and he commands them. He draws a line in the sand and he says, you will come to this point and you will not come any further. And the sea worships him.

And then God looks at you and says, come and you say, no, I will not. It is safe to say that apart from the fallen angels, man. Is the only disobedient creature, and it's why many of the prophets at times speak about all of creation standing to its feet, all of creation acknowledging the rightness of God when he judges wicked man, we are sinful, we do exactly what it says here, all have sinned.

Now, the word all is inclusive. There's no exception since Adam, our father, every man, woman and child on the face of this earth has sinned and has sinned so many times that we could not even begin to calculate it. Now, I want you to think about this.

Let me ask you a question, how many times did Adam and Eve sin before they were cast out of the presence of God and all of creation was condemned? Once one sin was sufficient. To drowned our entire universe in sorrow and chaos. Now, let me ask you a question, how many times have you sinned? You have sinned like myself more times than you can count.

And then if you take all of us collectively. How much have we sinned against God? Now you can see that the fact that God allows us even to exist is an act of grace and mercy on his part. Now, when we talk about sin, I want you to understand that it's not just something that we do.

It's something that is a part of us. Now, if I tell you, you know, you sin or you broke this law, that's one thing. But if I say this to you, it'll probably make you very angry.

Not only do you sin, but you sin because you are a sinner, because you are evil. Now, we don't like that word evil applied to us. We want that word applied to someone like Hitler, someone who has been very destructive to to countless lives, maybe even nations, societies.

But we rarely think of ourselves as evil. But what you need to understand is that this whole world and all the pain and all the suffering and all the corruption and all the violence, it's just a larger picture. Of your heart and of mine.

And let me give you an example, let's hold our place here in the book of Romans and let's just look through the Bible for a moment, let's begin in the book of Genesis. Let's go to Genesis chapter six and let's look at verse five, Genesis chapter six, verse five. It says, then the Lord saw the wickedness of man,

that it was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Now, look at this phrase that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. I was preaching this one time many years ago when a reporter came up to me and he was very, very angry. He said he did not agree with me.

And I said, on what point? And he said, well, you said every intent of the thought of a man's heart is evil. And I said, well, first of all, sir, you must understand you're not disagreeing with me. That's not my opinion, but it's something I read.

It's in the Bible. You're disagreeing with the Bible. It's what the Bible says.

And he said, well, I just don't believe that man is that bad or that I'm that bad. And so I gave him an illustration that may be helpful also for you. And it's this.

Imagine that right now in the auditorium where you are. That I could take out your heart, speaking figuratively, I could take out your heart and I could take every thought you've ever conceived from the from the moment of your birth until this very moment in this auditorium, every thought you've ever had. And I could put those thoughts on a DVD.

And then what if I walked up to you and said, hey, I've got a surprise for you tonight instead of me preaching, I'm going to show all your thoughts to this entire auditorium of maybe thousands of people. Now, what how would you respond? Well, if you were sane, if you were intelligent person, a thinking person, you would do everything in your power to keep that from happening, because even maybe this evening or this morning, whenever you're watching this video, maybe when you even walked in the building, you were thinking things or thought things about other people that you would not want exposed to anyone. On.

You see, if I could put everything you've ever thought on a DVD and I could show it in this place, you would run out of here and you would never show your face here again. Because you have thought things so perverted. So evil that you would not want to share them even with your closest friend.

And. You know, that is true now, think about this, you would be ashamed for all of us to see what was in your heart, and yet, you know that we're just like you. Now, how much greater will your shame be on the day you stand before a holy God? And all your sin is exposed, you see all the things we read about in the newspaper.

All the things we see on television, the wars, the atrocities, the violence, the perversion, Jesus said, it all comes out of a heart, a heart just like yours and a heart just like mine. You see, one of the reasons why this world cannot be healed is because we will not face the facts. It's not that there's someone outside doing evil to us, but the evil comes from within and because of it, you and I commit sin.

Now, let's go to Genesis chapter eight and let's look at verse twenty one. It says the Lord smell smell the soothing aroma and the Lord said to himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man. Now, listen, for the intent of man's heart is evil.

Evil. Not just a mistake, it is evil from his youth, from his childhood, you know. I hear people say sometimes that we ought to just let the children lead us.

My dear friend, whoever says that has never had children, knows very little about children. Let me give you an example, an illustration just to prove to you that this text really is true. It's really validated by our daily lives.

Let's take a three year old or four year old child. Let's put them in a room and let's put around them every magnificent toy that can be found. And let's let them play and select toys until they have selected their favorite toys.

And then let's take the toy that they most do not want to play with, that they most reject. And let's put it in their hands. They throw it away.

We pick it up again and put it in their hands and they throw it away. We do it again and they throw it away. They do not want the toy, but there's something that we can do to make them want the toy.

What do we need to do? Let's bring another four year old into the room and set that four year old down in front of the first child, and then let's take that toy that the first child did not want to play with at all and put that toy in the hands of the second child. What's going to happen? World War Three. You know, it's true.

And this is just a small illustration of why there are wars today. Why there are divorces, why there are murders, why there is hatred. You see, the problem is not outside of us, the problem is in us.

The Bible says that we are fallen. That we are broken, that we are evil, that we are rebels. And that we must turn to God to be fixed.

To become something else. Now, let's go for a moment to the book of Isaiah, Isaiah, chapter 64 and verse six, Isaiah 64, verse six. Isaiah says this, for all of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment and all of us wither like a leaf and our iniquities like the wind take us away.

This is a very sad picture, but it's a picture that's lived out every day in all the lives, human lives around us and lived out. Even by the person whom we see every morning when we look in the mirror, he says, for all of us have become like one who is unclean. Now, this word can refer to many things, many things so dark and so dirty that I wouldn't even want to mention them in mixed company.

But let's use one possible reference here that it's referring to leprosy. I don't know if any of you have ever worked or been around lepers or been in a leper colony. I have.

And I can tell you there are different stages, of course, of leprosy. But the worst stage of leprosy is a horrible, horrible thing. The flesh is rotting off the body.

There is body fluid and blood and pus, and there is that smell of rot from which the person cannot escape. It's a horrible thing. If I had if I was there with you and I had a leper on the platform with me, you would have smelled him when you walked into the auditorium.

Now. I want you to think about some things, let's say that all of you want to make that leper presentable, you want to cover up their their filth in their stench. And so you go to some very exclusive clothing store and you buy some cloth, maybe the finest silk that can be purchased from Asia.

White and beautiful without spot, and you take the leper and you wrap the leper in that cloth and then you take perfume and you just douse the leper in the finest of perfumes. And then you stand back to look at

your creation for a moment, possibly for a moment, the leper is going to appear presentable and it's not going to smell. But what's going to happen in just a few moments? The corruption of that leper's body is going to bleed through the cloth.

The stench is going to break its way through the fragrance that you have poured upon the leper's head and the cloth is going to become just as vile as the man who is inside. Now, this is a wonderful illustration of why you cannot be presentable to God by your own virtue, your own deeds, your own merit. You see, because we are fallen from within, because we are dark from within, because we are sinners and because we are in one sense evil.

Then then all of that bleeds through everything that we do. And there is a sense and that apart from Jesus Christ and his gospel, every deed that we might think about committing. Is vile, is unacceptable to God, that's why so many religions that pretend to offer salvation through works.

They have to do one of two things, either they have to make God lower than he is dirtier than he is, not quite as holy, not quite as righteous, or they have to raise man up to make man cleaner than he is, better than he really is to say that you're going to save yourself by even by religious deeds in an Orthodox church, an evangelical church, a Baptist church, Presbyterian church, to say that you're going to join one of these religious institutions and that you're going to do good things. And through that you are going to go to heaven, according to the scriptures. That is absolutely absurd.

Also, people will sometimes ask me about, especially when I'm on university campuses, they'll ask me, well, what about the good atheist? What's God going to do with the good atheist? And I always respond by saying this. Well, first of all, before I talk about that, could you please give me his telephone number? Because I hear about him on almost every campus that I go to, but I've never met him. Where is he? Where is the good atheist? Where is the good man? Secondly, let me say this.

Someone may say to me, well, I know this atheist who says there is no God, who denies God, denies the Bible, denies Christ, denies everything, says it's all rubbish. And yet he he helps his neighbors. When the little lady who lives across the street is sick, he brings her soup or porridge that if something breaks down in your house, he's liable to come over there and help you fix it.

What about him? I mean, it's got to amount to something what he's done. Well, let me let me put it to you this way. From a scriptural point of view, the determination of what is good and what is evil is based principally in the scriptures upon is it done out of love for God and for God's honor, or is it done for love of self and for self honor? You see, the Bible says, first of all, that there are really no atheists.

That's the first thing you need to understand about scripture. It does not argue about atheism. It says there are no atheists.

It says in Romans chapter one that all men know, know that there is a God and they know that he has a sense of justice to him, to himself. They also know that they are somehow out of pace with that God, that they are not in agreement with that God, that there is friction between them and that God and that they are under judgment. And for that reason, the Bible says in Romans one that men, rather than accept the knowledge of God, which they know is true, they purposely deny it.

They restrain it. They hold it down. They don't want to know.

They don't want to think about it. So the Bible teaches that there are no honest atheists. There are only men who, because they love their darkness, they refuse to believe that there is a righteous God.

You see what the Bible says is true, all men have sin. Now, let's go back to the book of Romans where we were chapter three, Romans chapter three. I want us to look for just a moment in chapter three at that's a very important argument that the apostle Paul makes in verse nine of chapter three.

Now, he's he's talking about the Jew and the Gentile in his mind here in the book of Romans, the world is divided up into two groups, Jew and Gentile, the Jews, of course, those who are physical descendants of Abraham and Gentiles, everyone else. Now, let's look. He says, what then are we that is the Jews better than they, the Gentiles? The answer is not at all.

He says, for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin, all are under sin, and then he goes on as it is written, there is none righteous, not even one righteousness refers to conformity to a standard. To be in agreement with a norm or a standard or a rule, OK, now in the scriptures, God's character and God's will revealed in the law, that is the standard. And instead of submitting to that standard, the Bible says that all of us have departed from it, the word righteous and righteousness actually indicates the idea of something that is straight and the opposite of righteous or the the term unrighteousness means to be crooked, perverted, twisted, and that's what all of us have become twisted, perverted, crooked, not walking in the way that we are supposed to walk because we are not as we should be.

Man was created good. But man is now morally depraved. Now, let's go on, he says there is none righteous and then he says, no, not one, not even one.

It's as though Paul is almost able to read our minds. He looks at a group of people and he says none are righteous. And probably in most of those people, they are thinking that is true, most people aren't righteous, but I am.

So Paul comes back and says, no, no, not even one. And then verse 11. He says there is none who understands.

There is none who seeks for God now, really, those two things go together in what way? You know, even though a few people will claim profess to be atheist, most people will admit, yes, I believe that there's a God and that demonstrates how little understanding they have. Why, if you honestly and truly believe. That there is a God.

Then the only understanding, the only reasonable thing to do. Is to search out that God and to search for truths about God above every other activity in life. It is the most important thing to discover.

Who is this God? What does he require of me? But people say, I believe there is a God. But I'm going to live as though there is not a God, it's like someone who says you tell them there is a fire in the building and they say, I believe that. But then they sit in the building until they are consumed.

You see, that is absolutely unreasonable, it shows a lack of understanding. The Bible says very, very clearly that the most important information or knowledge that a person can possess is the knowledge of God. The Bible even warns us in Jeremiah, chapter nine, that wise men shouldn't boast in their wisdom.

And that strong men shouldn't boast in their strength and that wealthy men shouldn't boast in their wealth, but he who boasts should boast in this, that he knows me, the knowledge of God, you know, years ago I was studying Spanish in a institute in Peru and I was sharing my faith with as many people as I possibly could. And one day I sat down with this girl and a guy who was her friend and began to talk to them about Christ. And she said, well.

I believe in Christ, I believe in God, but my brother doesn't, he's an atheist, he's so unreasonable. And I looked at her and I said, do you live for Christ? I mean, do you study his word to know what he desires and do you live for him? She said, well, no. I said, well, then your brother is more reasonable, logical, consistent than you are.

And she said, how can that be? And I said, well, he says there is no God and he lives as though there is no God. You say there is a God, but you live as though there is no God, you see the problem. Now, let's go on, he says in verse 12, all have turned aside together, they have become useless.

Let me ask you a question, how useful are you to God? What this is really asking us is this, do you serve him? One of the greatest characteristics of a person who does not know God and who is not known by God is that they are useless to him. They are not involved in service to God. That is a frightening truth.

Why is it frightening? Because there are so many people in churches today, Orthodox, evangelical, Baptist, Presbyterian brethren. There are so many people in churches today who claim to have a personal faith in Jesus Christ, and yet they never serve him. They are useless to him, you see, we must understand that many, many people who go to even good churches are not Christian, they are not Christian now.

Let's go on, he says, there is none who does good, there is not even one. Now, isn't this amazing? Almost in every country that I have ever been in, in which I've ever been. You know, I'll witness to people, whether in a restaurant or on the streets or in a taxi, I'll witness to them.

And I would have to say that most people, the great majority of people. To whom I witness, they tell me. That they're going to go to heaven because they are good, I'll say, if you died right now, where would you go and most say I would go to heaven when I ask them why? The answer is, well, I'm basically a good person.

And. Now, let's look at the book written by God, look at verse 12, there is none who does good, there is not even one. Now, we have here a contradiction and we must choose in whom are we going to believe? Most people, this is frightening, maybe even some of you, you think that, well, you're OK and you do not realize that one sin.

One sin condemned the whole world. And yet you have sinned so many times, you are not good. And here's something else that you need to understand.

Goodness to your fellow man. Is a good thing. But it's not necessarily without sin, it's not necessarily good before God, why is that? Because primarily all sin is sin because it contradicts God and our relationship with him.

God created you. God sustains you. God is worthy of all worship, honor and obedience for you to do something primarily for any other reason other than the glory of God.

Is sin. Is sin, I know that that is hard for us to accept today because we live in a man centered universe where man is the measure of all things, but what we need to understand is that in the scriptures, it's not a man centered universe. You're not judged by how you treat men only.

You're judged primarily. By what you do with God. With God.

Now, I want us to look at a few other things here that's in this text, look in verse 13, he describes man, he says their throat is an open grave with their tongues, they keep deceiving the poison of asp is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Here it's talking about the mouth and in the scriptures, the mouth is very important because the mouth. Demonstrates what is in the heart.

All you have to do is listen to a person for a while, listen to their speech, and the Bible says you're going to know what's in their heart. That the speech of men is full of cursing, it's full of bitterness, it's full of lying and untruths, you know, all of us are guilty of this, you cannot say you're not, you have lied, you have slandered, you have spoken bitterly, you have given false testimony, you have cursed men and God. It is a reality, one of the reasons why I believe that the Bible is true, one of one of the very important reasons for which I believe this is that everything it testifies about man is true and what it's saying here is true.

Now, you can be in denial. But it doesn't change reality oftentimes. Well, let me put it this way.

When I was a young man, I was not a Christian and was a pretty. Immoral person, and I ran with a bunch of immoral people and our mouths were evidence of the immorality that was in our heart, but I can tell you this, that was over 30 years ago and now when I'm on an airplane or a bus or in a store or something where I'm around young people, a university or even a high school or grade school. I am absolutely amazed at the filth, the immorality, the vulgarity, the violence, the slandering that comes out of the mouth of young people, and it's just a demonstration that we are falling in my country, in your country, in Europe, in Asia, so many places we are falling further and further away from God's standard and we are becoming more and more exactly like the Bible describes, full of bitterness, full of anger, full of violence.

Now, let's go on, it says in verse 15, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths and the way of peace they have not known. Now, when you read this, you may be thinking about men in the past, presidents, dictators, kings that have caused warfare and violence, murdered thousands, maybe millions of people. And you think that this text just refers to them.

But no, this text also refers to you. Do you realize how many more Hitler's there would be in the world and in world history if only people had that much power? Many times. People who say I would never do anything like that, it's just because they have never had the power to do so.

I mean, because the things that cause wars and the things that cause genocide are found in us. Divorce. Broken friendships.

Jealousy. Envy, a desire for power, a desire for everyone to look at us. You see, we're no different, we just lack the power to carry it out.

To carry it out now, let's go on, it says, and the path of peace they have not known, verse 18, there is no fear of God before their eyes. You know, that applies to some of you. And you know what that means.

And I don't want to be offensive, but it means that you are a biblical fool. The beginning of all knowledge, Proverbs tells us, is the fear of the Lord, but fools despise wisdom and knowledge. There there are even

some of you here right now listening to my voice who would claim to have some sort of faith in God, and yet you live without the fear of God.

And it's your fault, but it's also the fault of much preaching today. People preach, pastors sometimes preach, evangelists preach about God and they make him look more like Santa Claus than the Lord of the universe and the judge of all the earth. It's true.

It's very, very true. You see. You say that you believe in God, but you don't read his word that demonstrates a lack of the fear of God.

You say that you believe in God and maybe you read his word as an intellectual exercise, but you don't seek to obey his word. That's a lack of the fear of God. Maybe you're a part of some church or Christian youth group in which everything is fun, everything is horizontal relationships, you and your friendships, and and God is just someone who makes all the good things happen.

That demonstrates a lack of the fear of God. Now, when people hear this kind of language, fear of God, they think, why should I fear God? The word means honor, reverence to give the honor due to God that he deserves, the honor that belongs to him, to recognize who he is, your creator, your sustainer. This world was made by him, made for him.

You are being granted the privilege to live here. That demands from you respect, honor, praise, worship, gratitude, thanksgiving. As a matter of fact, in Romans chapter one, when it talks about the downfall of mankind, the downfall of societies and cultures, the great sin in that chapter is, although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks.

That's the description of men. Of men, they all know God, but they do not honor him as God or give thanks. Now, let's go on in verse 19.

He says, for we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God. For by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. There are so many truths in this passage, and we're just going to look at a few of them and look at them only briefly, but they are very, very important.

First of all, God has given us his law. He has revealed it in two ways. There is a general revelation and there is a specific or special revelation.

The general revelation of God's law has been given to all men. God says that he's written it on their hearts. Isn't it amazing, astounding that in almost every culture of the world? It is a sin to lie.

It is wrong to murder. It is prohibited to steal another man's wife. Is that just a coincidence? Did that separately evolve that system of ethics through countless cultures who never had contact with one another? Or is the Bible true? That God has written such things in the heart of men so that men might know.

So that men might know that they are wrong and that they might seek God for the remedy, so that's general revelation, but then there's special revelation in which God has revealed his law through his word. One of the greatest manifestations, of course, in the early history of redemption is the law, the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. God there reveals what he requires of man.

He sums it all up in this, that you should love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and that you should love your neighbor as yourself. And you see, we have violated his law. To certain degrees, we have violated every law God has ever given.

Now, let's talk about the law for just a moment. I remember one time speaking at a university in Eastern Europe and was talking about the law, and some student became very angry and started saying, you know, you come to us with this law, this law of your God, this oppressive law that restrains our freedoms and keeps us from doing what we want to do. It is slavery.

It is restrictive. It's legalism. And so when he got finished, I just asked him a simple and very practical question.

Well, exactly what law that God has given. And that you hate so much restrains you from doing what you want to do. I mean, would you please share with me one of those horrible laws? Well, let me give you some.

You shall not murder. Does that restrain you? Does that keep you from doing what you want to do? You shall not lie, God said. Why do you hate that law? So much, oh, and you shall not take another man's wife.

Does that bother you? And if these kind of laws do really upset you and enslave you and keep you from doing what you want to do. Then aren't you saying that you are exactly as the Bible says you are? A depraved rebel who hates righteousness and loves evil, you see all the freedom that students talk about today, what you think about it, what does it mean? I want my freedom, freedom to do what? Now, just think for a moment, don't be angry, just think freedom to do what? Whenever I ask that question, it usually comes down to this, to freedom to party, freedom to get drunk. Freedom to.

Take drugs. Freedom to pursue. Sexual relationships with other people without any commitment whatsoever, freedom to be involved in all sorts of sexual perversion.

Just think about it for a moment, whenever your society here in Russia, whenever my society back in the West, whenever young people and university students start talking about freedom, all I have to do is ask them freedom to do what? And when they start answering that question, you see. That what's in their heart is exactly what the Bible says, sin. I had some guys in that same meeting that night, they were laughing, and even after all of that, they kept heckling me, saying things from the crowd.

And and one of the things was, well, what's wrong with just going out and partying and doing all these things? I said, listen to me, young man. I suppose you're all going to go out tonight after this meeting and party, as you say. And they said, yeah.

What does that mean? What are you going to do when you get drunk? OK. So you're going to ingest things to put you in a state where you can enjoy yourself better because you're so hollow and shallow and empty that you can't enjoy yourself without getting drunk. And you're going to hurt your body to do it.

Now, what else are you going to do now and chase girls? So what does that mean? This is what it means. You're going to try to find a girl to use. For your physical gratification.

And then afterwards, discuss the matter with your friends and boast about it, and they started laughing, I says, what does that say about you that you're going out to hunt tonight, another person you see? So when the Bible says that men are evil, it really means that. And then the response, of course, well, well,

the girl wants to do it, too. Then I ask the question, does her father want you to do it? Are you not driving a knife through his heart if he finds out what you have done to his daughter? You see, there's just no justification for it.

What people today demand freedom. Is freedom to sin. To hurt, to use, to buy and to sell, and that is why I tell you that the very thing that is in you is the very thing that causes all the wars in the world.

Now, let's go on, he says. It speaks, the law speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God. God gave the law for what purpose? To show us to reveal light upon our sin.

Why does he just want to make us all feel miserable? No, there's a purpose. What is that purpose? He has given the law as a light to show us that we are sinful, that we are unreconciled with God, that there is war between God and us and that we need salvation. We need to be reconciled, and that comes not through just going to church or trying to be a nice guy that comes.

Through the means that God has given us. He sought to reconcile the world to himself through the death of his son. So the purpose of the law and the purpose of everything I've done here this hour is not just to make you feel bad.

The purpose of everything I've done here is to show you that you are broken, that you are sinful, that you are guilty. He. So that you'll cover your mouth and stop boasting about how good you are.

That you'll stop just chasing after superficiality until you die. That you'll realize that there is a God, you have broken his law, you must be reconciled and that you would turn to God to be saved through his mercy and his grace. So we have talked a great deal about sin.

Yes, we have. Was my design to hurt you? Yes. Yes, it was.

Was that my only design? No. My ultimate design is that you being hurt by the preaching of the word of God. You might turn to God.

And be saved. In the next session, we're going to talk more about this matter of sin and the righteousness of God. And then go on to speak about how we can be reconciled in spite of our sin, how we can be reconciled to a holy and righteous God.

Thank you very much. May God bless you.

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