

God's Response to Our Sin

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon delves into God's response to sin, emphasizing the balance between God's grace and His perspective on sin. It highlights the Old Testament justice system and the New Covenant's call to acknowledge, confess, repent, and turn away from sin. The sermon discusses God's hatred for sin, His love for sinners, and how His grace empowers believers to break free from sin through repentance and surrender. Personal testimonies and biblical examples illustrate God's willingness to forgive and transform those who sincerely seek Him.

Scripture: Romans 6:14, 1 John 1:9, Titus 2:11, 2 Chronicles 33:12, Luke 15:11, Ephesians 2:8, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Jude 1:4, Psalm 51:10, James 4:7

Topics: "God's Grace", "Repentance and Transformation"

Description

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Transcript

The title of my message this morning is God's response to our sin. And I want to do my best to present a balanced picture of God's grace and also his perspectives on sin. The first thing you've got to understand about God's grace is the way it's revealed in the New Testament can only be understood through the justice system of God in the Old Testament.

You know, in the Old Testament times, if you sinned, you had to face the penalty of the law. And it could be making a sacrifice, taking your favorite little lamb, you know, to the altar and cutting its throat, or paying some fine, or for the things that you and I have done, being taken outside of the camp and stoned until you're dead. That's God's perspective of sin.

You know, and the New Covenant didn't mean that we can suddenly have a disdain for God's commandments and live lawlessly. And when Jesus died, it didn't mean that God quit hating sin and just threw out his judicial system. Calvary meant that Jesus provided an atonement for our sin.

And all God asks, you know, he's not demanding that we go through all those rules and pay the penalty and all that stuff. All he asks is that we acknowledge our sin. In other words, you know, confess it, take responsibility for it, agree with God that what we did was wrong, acknowledge it and confess it, and to repent of our sin, to renounce it, to turn away from it, to struggle against the temptation to commit sin.

That's all the Lord asks in the New Covenant. That's quite a deal. You know, when you think about what it was like to live in the Old Testament times, God's grace means that we live the rest of our lives with the grateful awareness of the price that Jesus paid on that cross.

And you know, if anything, it means that we are going to do all the more to obey him and please him. Paul had a tremendous revelation of God's grace. You know, that's what you see constantly coming forth from him.

He grew up in a harsh, legalistic, religious system. I like what Dave Leopold says, that Saul the Pharisee was just like Isis, was in the same killing, hateful spirit as Isis. And I believe that's absolutely the truth.

You know, because it was based on a rigid, meticulous keeping of the law that made you look better and had nothing, really, by the time the first century came around, had nothing to do with the Lord and what pleased him. And so when Saul the Pharisee got a sight of this Jesus Christ in his lowliness and in his love and in his grace, he was overwhelmed and undone by God's grace. And so every time, you know, his pen came out, practically all he could talk about was God's grace because he was still within the confines of this religious Jewish system that was all caught up in rules and regulations and all that.

And Paul just, man, he just so much wanted to share with everyone the glories of God's grace. But you know who struggles most with that kind of revelation? You know, when you've, let me put it this way, God's grace will never be real to you until you've had a revelation of yourself as a criminal before a holy God. You know, and I have, I've dealt with a lot of people down through the years, and the ones who seem to have the most difficult time really appreciating God's grace to them are those who have never, who didn't come out of some kind of horrible sin like you and I have come out of.

Especially those who have grown up in the church. It's harder for them because they have not really had to face the consequences of their sin. A life that has been trashed and ruined because of sin.

And then coming out the other side of that, the gratitude that comes forth from that. Like Jesus said, he who forgives, who has been forgiven, much loves much. There's just something about that dynamic of coming out of a life of sin that makes you grateful for God's grace.

But some people have a struggle with it. I want to read a little, it's actually part of a commentary I wrote years ago. And the title of it is, I'm Pretty Sure Aunt Bea Ended Up in the Other Place.

Let me just read this. I'm only going to read part of it. Aunt Bea is only a television character, of course.

But what she represents is a dangerously deceptive mindset that 40 years later remains firmly entrenched in our culture. I can remember at least one episode of The Andy Griffith Show where Aunt Bea was in church, but I cannot think of one instance of her interceding for people or earnestly talking to others about Jesus. In other words, I never saw any indications that she had truly been converted.

As far as I can tell, Aunt Bea wasn't really a Christian. She was simply a nice lady living in a Christianized nation who went to a Christian church. Without question, she personifies the erroneous notion that good

people go to heaven and bad people go to hell.

How strikingly this contrasts with the Apostle Paul's perspective on salvation. In Ephesians 2, he makes abundantly clear the desperate condition of every unconverted person, dead in their sins, following Satan, living in the lust of their flesh, and having the wrath of God upon them. Nice little old Aunt Bea? Andy's Aunt Bea? Yes, truth be told, there is no middle ground.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not one. This includes the Aunt Beas of the world.

Well, says a respectable church-going woman in a huff, I've lived an upright life since childhood. I've never been worldly and I certainly have not followed Satan. Oh, so in other words, you are alleging that the Bible is not telling the truth.

You're saying that you're a good person and have no need of a savior. Therefore, you shall not have one. And you know, I shared that, read that little blurb there once in a sermon in a conservative church in Atlanta.

I'll never forget it. Right when I got to the end there and I said that, some lady about 40 rows back just let out a gasp when she heard that, because I think the truth of it just struck her in the heart. You know, how can I say it? We have to see ourselves as sinners.

And before we see ourselves as sinners, we're never going to feel a need for a savior. And when we do get a savior, you know, unless we have seen what God has saved us from, we're never going to have a real appreciation for his grace. All right, now I want to talk here for a few minutes about three of God's perspectives on sin.

Yeah, let me just get into this. Number one is that God hates sin. We need to know that.

That needs to be very real to us, how much God hates sin. He hates every single act of sin, and don't ever kid yourself on that. He intensely hates sin.

The Bible makes it very, very clear. And you know why he does? Because sin ruins people's lives. Sin enslaves people.

Sin destroys families. Sin separates people from him. Sin corrupts society, and mostly sin leads to death.

God hates sin, and anyone who loves God is going to hate sin also. And the primary purpose Jesus came to earth was not to provide a salvation for hell. You're all looking at me like I have three heads.

I don't. I only have one head, and it did say what I just said. I heard it.

That's not why Jesus came to this earth. Jesus came to this earth to save us from our sin. Hell is only the consequences of a life of sin, but people want to bypass that.

But let me give you a couple of verses just because you don't believe me. Matthew 12:1 says just what I just said, that Jesus came to save his people from their sins. And in Titus 2, Paul said that Jesus gave himself to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds.

That's why he came. First John 2, the apostle John said, you know that he appeared in order to take away sins. That's what it's all about.

That's why Jesus had to come to this earth, because people were laden with sin, and it was destining them to hell. But it was the sin was the problem, you know. But you know what people want to do is they want to sidestep that.

They don't care about dealing with the sin. They just want to get to heaven. You know, it's a lot like the thief who got arrested for breaking into a house or something or other, and he comes before the judge, and he's pleading to the judge not to send him to prison.

But he's not, you know, pleading for mercy on the basis of any determination to change his ways. He's absolutely impenitent. He has no intention of changing, and as soon as he gets back out, he'll go back to burglarizing houses.

You know, but that's the way a lot of people are with the Lord. You know, we're not looking to be changed. We're just looking to get out of the consequences of our actions.

But let me ask you guys a question. This is rhetorical, Chris. That means you don't have to actually answer, okay.

Chris volunteered to take Sherman's place, you know, since Sherman left. And can you guys think of anyone more deserving than Chris to be regularly beat up on by Pastor Steve? You deserve every bit of it, brother, and I'm going to give it all to you. All right, now to my question.

Don't ever throw me off like that again, Chris. What would you think if, you know, think about back home, and if there's some superior court judge there in your area, and he just, let's say, maybe he had an experience with the Lord, I don't know, but all of a sudden he decides, I'm going to just start showing mercy to everyone. And every criminal that comes before him, I don't care how horrendous the crime or whatever he's done, this guy just starts setting them free, left and right.

What would you think about a judge that did that? How quick would it take you to, you know, want to impeach him, right? But then how is it that we can demand a holy God to overlook willful rebellion against his authority? But we do. You know, we've just slowly slid into this sappy, over, how do I say it, hyper-grace atmosphere in America. You know, it's exactly what the Bible predicted for the apostasy.

It's just what was going to happen. It's what itching ears want. Let me have my sin.

Let me have my own way. And Jude said, Jude's an end times book, Jude said that there would be those who would corrupt the grace of God and twist it and pervert it into licentiousness. And that's what we see in the church culture today.

It's just a loss of the fear of God, a loss of the reverence of God, and so on. William Barclay said, grace is not only a gift, it is a grave responsibility. A man cannot go on living the life he lived before he met Jesus Christ.

He must be clothed in a new purity and a new holiness and a new goodness. The door is open, but the door is not open to the sinner to come and remain a sinner, but for the sinner to come and become a saint. Amen? That's beautiful.

That means there's hope for you and me. The door is open, but the door is open to become a transformed man. Amen? All right.

So God hates sin, but number two, God loves sinners. Aren't you glad about that? He loves sinners because he loves people and people are sinners. You know, we're just sinful.

That's just the way we are. And you know, when Jesus was on earth, that was what the Pharisees couldn't stand about Jesus. You know, they just scowled at him.

This man receives sinners and eats with them. And he's a friend of tax gatherers and sinners. Those were the accusations that the Pharisees hurled at Jesus.

And you know what? He said it himself. I didn't come to call the righteous, meaning the self-righteous. I came to call sinners.

Praise God. That means that I can follow him. We used to, Sister Kathy mentioned that the other night that we used to have a sign on the old chapel that said, sinners only allowed.

And the Pharisees started complaining about it. So we had to take it down. I don't know.

Maybe I'll get brave and put it back up here at this new chapel. You know, because to walk into this chapel means one thing, that we see our overwhelming need for a savior. Amen.

I do. I've been at this for 30 years and I, to this day, see my need more than ever for that wonderful savior, Jesus Christ. God loves sinners.

I'm going to just give you a couple examples out of the Bible. And I'm going to try to pick, you know, I tried to find the worst of the worst ones I could. So we'll go back to the Old Testament, start with King Ahab.

King Ahab was put into that place by God. And he was horrible. What did he do? The first thing he did is he went to Tyre and Sidon and, excuse me, got this king who was a devil worshiper, got his daughter, who was also a devil worshiper, and married her.

I mean, he went and found the foulest female on earth and brought her into the king's palace. Her name was Jezebel, of course. And she hated everything to do with Jehovah and the people of Jehovah.

And one day, Elijah confronted him and told him, if you don't repent and change your ways, God is going to destroy you. And it somehow, momentarily anyway, got through to Ahab. And he trembled and, you know, he started to repent to the Lord in sackcloth and ashes.

And then this is what the Lord said to Elijah, who I don't think was all this, all that happy with what the Lord was doing. But this is what the Lord said to Elijah, you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days. How quick the Lord is to accept and forgive any sinner.

It's so amazing to me. It's just almost to the point it just doesn't seem right. You know, sometimes you want people to suffer a little bit.

How about King Manasseh? He was even worse by far than Ahab. Because by the time Manasseh came, you know, they were getting to the end of the age of the kings. And he made the streets of Jerusalem flow

with the blood of God's people.

Those who were committed and consecrated to serve Jehovah, Manasseh destroyed them. In fact, he was the one, experts believe, who put Isaiah in a hollow log and had them saw that log in half, sawing him in half. You know, he was a horrible, horrible, evil man.

And yet he was the leader of God's people. So the Lord sent the Assyrians down into Israel and to Judah, I mean. And they captured him, put a hook in his nose, and drug him back to Assyria.

You talk about getting humbled and put in your place. You know, Mr. High and Mighty could do anything he wanted. Now he's following along behind these cruel Assyrians.

And he gets up there and something happens for him. It says here in 2 Chronicles 33, when he was in distress, he entreated the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. When he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom.

Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah was God. Wow, that is so amazing that someone that was that wicked cut Isaiah in half. You know, can you imagine how horrible that was? And I don't know how many hundreds of God's followers he murdered.

It'd be like taking Ben Laden or one of these ISIS guys over here and just lavishing him with kindness and goodness. You know, can you see how it would just be a little upsetting to people? If someone repents, God's willing to do it. And then in the New Testament, it's a little different.

It's the prodigal son. But you know the story, he went and to the faraway country and took half his father's money and wealth and so on and just spent it on selfish living, just totally selfish, self-centered. Didn't think a thing about anyone but himself.

And of course, it landed him in the pigpen. And he repented. He came to his senses, Jesus said.

He said, I have done wrong. I'm not worthy. And he came back.

He started heading back. And you know what? The father was out there watching for him. And when he saw his son coming back, he ran and embraced him.

And I love Spurgeon gave a sermon on this once. And he, the way he did it was just really, I don't know, it was just very touching. And it was such a blessing.

It just talked about how the father would see his son and saw him and kissed him. And then he pulled back and look at him again. He couldn't believe it.

He kissed him again and then again and again and again. He just couldn't stop kissing him. He was so thrilled to have his son back.

That's the heart of the father. When you repent, when you repent and it doesn't happen unless you repent. That's the difference between biblical grace and apostate grace.

The grace version found in the apostasy. There's the difference in the two. So the common theme, you know, for all these stories and many, many, many more stories in the Bible is that there has been sincere

and deep repentance.

But when the sinner comes back to God in repentance, all he finds is an atmosphere of love and grace and acceptance. Praise the Lord. You know, God will always receive a penitent heart.

I don't care what you have done. Yeah, I was thinking about this this morning. I had this message, I think I first came up with it about 11 years ago or 12 years ago and I used to give it occasionally.

I think the last time I gave it was in San Quentin, which was a few years ago, you know. And I was thinking about the men that I gave that message to that day and some of the crimes, some of the horrible things they had done to other people to get them there or the things that they were never caught doing, you know, and so on. But I don't care.

It don't matter what you've done. I don't care how shameful or horrible or selfish or cruel of a thing you have done to someone else. If you truly repent, God is going to accept you.

There's not going to be any condemnation. You don't have to drag around a load of guilt anymore. The slate is wiped clean from that day forward.

Praise the Lord. It's just amazing. God's great benevolent heart.

So amazing. So God hates sin, but God loves the sinner and is so quick to forgive. And the third thing is that God's grace provides the power to break free from sin.

Man, where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. Grace is abounding all over the place in this place, right? I mean this place is saturated with God's grace. We've come in here dragging our history of sin and failure and you're just going to find nothing but a tremendous cloud of God's grace to meet you here, set you free, empower you to, you know, go on into the future in his freedom, his liberty, in his spirit.

Man, what a great deal. But I don't know, you know, somewhere along the line we've gotten some, just some strange ideas about sin. We think one of, another one of the errant views of sin is that we're just, we're just stuck in it.

We just, you know, well this is the way I've always been. I can't get free. You know, God's done it for others, but he can't do it for me.

Let me just tell you, can I just say that's crazy? That's just nothing but pride that you're too big for God's grace. It's not true. The Lord never meant for a child of God to be a loser.

It is not in his mind. It's not in his kingdom. If you have come to the Lord in repentance, God is going to set you free.

I promise you he's going to set you free and he will keep you free as long as you keep turning to him. Jesus came to break the power of sin, as we've already heard. Listen to what Paul said about grace.

He said, for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. In other words, we've kind of already heard it. That was an excellent talk, Ken.

We've already heard how the glory of the Lord is upon the earth. And you know, there it is in Jesus Christ. God has made a way for every human being to come into his kingdom, whosoever will, right? Whosoever

will.

Anybody who wants to be free of the hold of sin and be in the kingdom of God and spend eternity with God, that door is wide open. And that's what grace has come to men. It's to bring that message to men.

That's what the gospel is. But he goes on, he says, talking about God's grace, he says it teaches us to say no to ungodliness. Hey, wait a minute.

I thought it was to let me stay in my ungodliness. No. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Titus 2, 11 and 12. You can look it up. It's there.

That is God's perspective of his grace. You know, his grace is there to set you free and to keep you free. Let me read what Randy Alcorn said.

Any concept of grace that makes us feel more comfortable sinning is not biblical grace. God's grace never encourages us to live in sin. On the contrary, it empowers us to say no to sin and yes to truth.

The same atmosphere of forgiveness that you come into, think of that picture of the father, the prodigal's father, you know, they're waiting with open arms. That same atmosphere of forgiveness, that same atmosphere will make a way through the temptation for you to say no to that temptation and to live in victory over that sin. I mean, that's what Paul was talking about, right? In 1 Corinthians 10, no temptation is overtaking you but such is his common man, but God will provide a way of escape and he does.

He provides a way of escape if only we will look to him. The reason you haven't had that before is because you don't know what it means or you haven't in the past known what it meant to abide in Christ, to be connected to the vine, to have the power and the grace of God flowing into your life on a regular basis. And you had gotten in the habit of just giving over, you know, you became hopeless and you weren't able to overcome your sin.

And so the more you sinned, the deeper entrenched you became in it. You became full of despair. You couldn't find your way out, but it was there for you the whole time.

It was there for you the whole time. But, you know, we get in such habit patterns and we don't realize it, but that's what we're trying to turn around in your guys' lives while you're here, is get you into a lifestyle of victory, a lifestyle of living in the spirit above that carnal realm, you know, and learning to be connected to the Lord so that his power and his grace can flow into your lives. Now, in sexual idolatry, I gave an illustration, I'm going to give it again here, about God's grace.

And I said that it's like a moving sidewalk, and I think if I remember right, I had talked about Heathrow Airport, that there was a long terminal in Heathrow. I think they must have changed it all, because I've been there several times, and it's not like it used to be whenever this happened, because I wrote this down from years ago. But anyway, at that time, there was a long terminal and these moving sidewalks that would go right down.

You guys know, what I said in the book, as you guys know, is that it's such a great picture of God's grace, because lining each side of that terminal are all these shops and places, and you know, back then, anyway, there were places that had pornography in them, there were bars, you know, where you could

drink, or you could buy cigarettes, just all kinds of carnality in these different shops lining that terminal. But you're standing, it's not on your own effort, you're just standing on that walkway, and that's a picture of God just taking you through. You're connected.

That's the secret. What's on your side is to stay connected to God, so His grace and His power can flow into your life. That is your responsibility as a believer.

But it is up to Him to carry you through, and He does. You'll find that that's true, you know, and you're just standing there. You don't have to exert any effort over, you know, the temptation to sin.

God is just going to take you right through. You know, it sounds all nice and pretty, and the reality is there are struggles, struggles, terrible struggles at times, and, you know, overwhelming temptations, and the enemy tries to trick you and set you up for a fall, and so on. That's reality of life.

But also what the Lord will build in you is a fear of God. And like I said earlier, we have lost the sense of the fear and the reverence for God that the church used to have 50 years ago, 100 years ago. It's just not the same culture in the church now that it was a century ago.

It's different. But anyway, when you start getting right with God, that fear starts getting built back into you. And it's like, I said in the book, it's like those handrails.

That fear just puts enough of an obstacle in your path to keep you from going and getting in trouble unless you are determined. I mean, if you're determined to go find trouble, okay, you can climb over the handrail and go, you know, get into whatever. If you want your sin, you can have it.

I mean, that's what a free will is all about, right? God doesn't take our will away from us. He doesn't take our freedoms away from us. Love for him, appreciation to him wouldn't mean anything if we were just robots.

We're not robots. We have a free will. We can choose to do right or do wrong.

God has made us free will agents. But, you know, I'll tell you what, when you're walking with the Lord and you're right with God, it's easier to do right than to do wrong. It's just true.

All right. So I'm going to end with a story that I end the book with, and maybe it'll mean something more to you coming live from Pastor Steve's lips. I haven't told this story in many years.

I hope I can remember. I've told the story so many times, I can't even remember what the truth is. But it did happen.

All this did happen in 1991. Man, that was 25 years ago. Wow.

1991. We had just been here a couple years, Kathy and I, and we were doing everything in those days. We were getting run into the ground.

You know, I'm helping with the counseling, and I'm just everything, and traveling every weekend to preach. And this particular weekend, Kathy's back had gone out, and so I had an engagement up in Michigan I had to go to, so I had to drive up there by myself. And back in those days, this girl wouldn't let me out of her sight for more than 10 minutes, because I wasn't too trustworthy.

But anyway, I was pretty confident, and so I took off that day. I think it was a Friday, maybe a Saturday. I think it was a Saturday, and I took off and drove all the way up there to Michigan.

And you know, then it was tempting me. I had temptations to go into cities. Back in those days, there wasn't an internet.

It was just you'd go find sleazy places in town. But I didn't do it, you know. And I got up to Michigan, and I remember it was just right past the state line.

I pulled up to get some gas, and went in, you know, filled it up, went into the gas station. And I don't know, what is it? We're just like this super awareness of stuff we shouldn't get into. I mean, you know, it could have been women's mittens.

There could have been a whole section of the store, and I would never even have seen it. But one little magazine, and I'm sure to see it. You know what I mean? But anyway, I was just going in to go to the bathroom, and I noticed some guy standing at the magazine rack.

And the thought came to my mind, I wonder if he, if there's something there, you know. Now, I wouldn't have gone over and picked up a magazine. I was beyond bad at that point, I think.

I'm not sure. But anyway, I remember thinking, see how we lie to ourselves. I remember thinking, well, maybe if I just walk by and look over his shoulder, I'll see something.

And sure enough, I did. Be careful what you wish for, right? Because I walked over, I saw some beauty centerfold, whatever he was looking at. And man, it shot into me like, oh, it was horrible.

It just, I was not having any struggles until I saw that. And now my mind is just filled with that image I just saw. And you know, my mind's going crazy, thinking of all the different things.

And right then, it was one of those times when the Lord spoke to me inside. I don't know how to explain it, but I heard run. I heard that, not through my ears, but in my inner, whatever.

And so I did. I just immediately took off and got out of there and got in my car and just made it to the church. And now I'm just all upset, you know, because I got to preach.

But I kind of fought my way out of it, got back with the Lord, you know, and got through the weekend. And on my way back, the temptations start in on me Monday morning because I got to make that drive back. And I'm thinking, you know, I could stop by that, that gas station and see what that girl really looks like.

And you know, the temptations were there, but I was confident in myself. You know, I just, I was just too much confidence and God really needed to deal with that. Now I'm not saying that God made this happen.

I think God does throw people's backs out occasionally. And I think that's what happened though, that he put me in a position that he knew that I couldn't handle because I needed to be humbled even more than I needed a pure heart. So anyway, you know, I started driving back and there's the, the off ramp.

And sure enough, I got off, went into that gas station, got that magazine and just saturated my mind with those images. It was horrible. It was, I just unleashed hell on myself.

And then I had to make that long six hour drive, just full of, you know, perversion and all the darkness, all the guilt, the shame. And this was the real clincher was that the following week I was going to be on Focus on the Family and I was all upset and, you know, anxious and man, here's an opportunity to share my testimony with the world about how God set me free. And now of all times, just days before I'm going to go onto the show, I do this.

It was horrible and yet it was all the Lord's doing. But anyway, I beat myself for days over that. And this was back when we lived on the old property that 12 acres in Crittenden.

And I could take you to the very spot this day. I've never been back there since we left, but I could take you to the very spot. I was on the side of a hill and I used to walk back and forth, you know, kind of making my way up the hill.

And I was just, I wasn't even praying, you know, this was like days later. All I've been doing in my prayer time is harping on myself and condemning myself and beating myself. You know, I was so mad at myself.

Why? Because I couldn't go into that radio interview with this clear conscience and all that, you know. Now I had to drag this in. I had not a single thought about how this all affected the Lord.

It was all about me, you know. And so I was walking along and I, like I said, I could take you to the very spot all these years later. And the Lord suddenly dropped a memory into my mind.

And it was 10 years before. I was in the Sheriff's Academy in Los Angeles. I'd gone through, by that point, I think about 16 weeks and most, a third of the class had been washed out, meaning they kind of got them, got rid of them one way or the other.

So, you know, you just had this fear that you were going to make a mistake or do something to either get kicked out or whatever. And so now it was time to do driving course. And they took us out to the Pomona Fairgrounds.

And it was like hundreds of acres, it seemed like, of just blacktop. And one of the things that they had us do was they set up cones and made kind of like a racetrack around there. And we took turns driving on this track, you know.

And they were teaching us how to maneuver and how to drive fast and pursuit and all that kind of stuff. And so I got in the car, it was my turn, and I had to put a helmet on. There was a roll bar, all that kind of stuff.

And the deputy instructor said, get in and take off. So I did. And so I'm just driving, I'm being kind of safe.

And he said, drive faster. So I sped up and I started going, you know, down the straightaway and stuff. And he said, faster.

I'm thinking, man, this is terrible, you know. This guy's going to get me kicked out of here. But I did what he said.

And so I go, okay, you know, and I went for it. And I remember I went down this straightaway and it came to this curve to the left and then to the right, like that. And I just, I didn't slow down enough or something, but I just blew right through the cones and just jumped right back on and just finished out the course.

And I was just sick inside. And I was just, you know, moaning because I didn't know what this meant. So I just said to the man, I guess I flunked, huh? And he said, flunked? What are you talking about? And I said, well, I, you know, I blew it back there.

And he said, oh, you did great. You just, you got off track for a second, but you jumped right back on. You did great.

And he gave me, you know, whatever the score was. But that memory of that moment right there is what the Lord put in my heart that day. And it just melted me because I realized then that my Christianity had become so much built on my own effort that I would get the glory for.

And especially on, you know, focus on the family. I could tell everyone how great I was. And that was the day the Lord really started helping me to understand his grace.

It was one of those humbling times that I really needed, greatly needed. All right. Now, I've been going through this old hymnal that was put together in 1941.

It's falling apart. I don't even know where I got it. I probably stole it from someone or something.

But I started going through it a few days ago. And in the beginning of it are some prayers. And this morning, I came on this prayer.

And I want to end with this. And I want you to get a sense of the reverence that is in this book, you know, and think about what it's like out there in the church world now in comparison to the atmosphere that's in this book. This is just a prayer that was there.

I just happened to read it this morning. I felt like, you know what, this is right, going right along with what the Lord put in my heart to speak on today. So I'm going to read it to everyone as a closing prayer.

Almighty God, fountain of all goodness and truth, receive our thanks for the revelation of thy grace, which is able to make us wise unto everlasting life. And mercifully grant we beseech thee that the words which we have heard this day may through thy blessing be so grafted in our hearts that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living to the honor and praise of thy name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord, I do want to express my overwhelming gratitude to you for your goodness and kindness to me all these many years. When I think of how self-centered and prideful and perverse I was 30 years ago, it amazes me, Lord. It just amazes me that you would actually go out in the highways and byways and find me, this foul, corrupt creature, and woo me to yourself and just cover me by your grace and just help me along all these years, even though I had such a tendency to stray from you and to go to desire sin.

And yet, Lord, you kept your hand on me. You've protected me all these years. Praise the Lord.

Thank you, Lord. It's been 31 years since I've been involved in sexual sin, and it's only been by your grace, Lord. I can't point to anything in myself other than a willingness to follow you.

And I pray that you make this truth, this reality of who you are and what you're like real to every heart in this place today. In Jesus' name, amen. The issue isn't what you do on Sunday morning.

The issue is the way you live your life from Monday to Saturday. The issue is who has your heart. What you cherish in your heart is what you are becoming like.

My friends and I were walking down the street. Bam, Playboy magazine totally rocked my world. This lifestyle that I was living just got out of control.

In a very short time, my life spiraled completely out of control. The whole time I've been looking at pornography, the longer I looked at it, it began to get progressively worse. I couldn't really explain what it was, but I was instantly addicted.

You cannot take steps down a path and avoid arriving at the destination. God wants your heart. Satan wants your heart.

Whoever has your heart will control you. Every time you sin, your desire for the things of God dies a little bit. Your faith dies a little bit.

Your desire to be free dies a little bit. And with it, the hope to get free. So how do we win this war and emerge with the victory that Christ has earned for us? What's missing is God's power to transform a person.

For God to come in and do a work to set us free up of something that has taken hold in our lives, that we have allowed in there, requires surrender. The Lord was able to show me that, yes, I can set you free from this. And hope for me was actually within reach.

That was something I'd never felt before. I don't care what kind of sexual sin you're involved in. I don't care how bound up you are.

If you will sincerely apply the principles that are in that book, God will absolutely set you free.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/o53EdQmw5Q.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/steve-gallagher/gods-response-to-our-sin/>

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