

# The Seriousness of Sin

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the greatest miracle God can do for us is to keep us from committing sin, contrasting forgiveness with being saved from sin. It highlights the difference between the Old Covenant where sin ruled over man and the New Covenant where sin does not have power over believers. The importance of honesty in walking in the light and seeking grace through the Holy Spirit to overcome sin is emphasized.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:21, Romans 6:14, 1 John 1:7, Psalms 103:3, Genesis 3:4, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Matthew 5:22, Matthew 5:28, Matthew 5:29

**Topics:** "Overcoming Sin", "The Power of the New Covenant"

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## Description

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## Transcript

So I'd like to continue from what we just heard. What is the greatest miracle that God can do for us? It is to keep us from committing sin. That is the most difficult thing for man to do.

So all these people who go around proclaiming miracles, and which our people are taken up with, they're not interested in the greatest miracle of all. There is no promise in the Bible that God will heal us from every sickness. And there's no human being who's ever experienced healing from every sickness.

We should not fool people about that. But there is a promise that we can be saved from sin. So when we think of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, what is the big difference? Let's begin with the first page of the New Covenant, Matthew chapter 1. Now the Old Testament is over, and we come to the New Testament.

And what is written on the very first page? I never saw this for 16 years of my Christian life, even though I read it so many times. I misread it, and then I show it to you. I think some of you who have not heard me before, you'll see you have misread it too.

What is the first promise in the New Testament? The very first one, Matthew 121. You will call his name Jesus. Why is he called Jesus? Because he will save his people from their sins.

Now there's a lot of difference between he will forgive their sins, and he will save them from their sins. Forgiveness is after you have fallen. Saving is before you have fallen.

It's not after a person falls that he's saved. Then he's forgiven. But he saves people from their sins means he will save them from falling.

But that has been misunderstood, and the gospel generally preached today is that Jesus will save us from hell. Now just by the way, you read through the entire Bible, there's no verse that says Jesus will save us from hell. That verse doesn't even come in the Bible, but that's what a lot of people are preaching.

What the Bible does preach is that Jesus will save us from sin, and most Christians are more interested in being saved from hell than being saved from sin. Now going to hell is the consequence of sin. And why is it that most Christians are really interested in, I'm not going to hell, I'm going to heaven.

It shows what a selfish, self-centered life even Christians are living. The fundamental problem with man is that self is in the center of his life. He always thinks of what is beneficial for me, what is beneficial for me.

I don't want to go to hell, I want to go to heaven. And the Lord is trying to remove self from the center of your life and mind and put Christ there. You're not really a Christian, I'll tell you that, if you don't have a desire to get rid of self from the throne of your life and make Christ the center.

That is true Christianity. There's a beginning, it's called the new birth where Christ comes in, but then there's a growth from there where more and more the self-life is put to death and the Christ life becomes manifest. This is true Christianity.

So if you look at the Old Testament, let's look at the beginning of sin in Genesis chapter 3. A lot of things we can learn here. God created man on the sixth day and he kept him with him the whole of the seventh day. That's the first lesson we learned.

24 hours Adam, after he was created, was with God on the seventh day and only then he sent him into the garden. As it were, he was telling him, you must learn to live in my presence. If you have a quiet time in the morning with the Lord, the purpose is that the whole day you live in the presence of the Lord, not just that 15 minutes reading the Bible.

But Adam forgot that. He was one day in the presence of God and the next day when he went out, he completely forgot about God's presence. And so when Adam and Eve went out to the garden, it says that God allowed the devil to tempt them and in the Old Covenant, there was absolutely no way for man to overcome.

He was defeated, defeated, defeated. But notice the basis of that. God had told him in Genesis and chapter 2 and verse 17, if you eat from that forbidden tree, you will surely die.

That means you'll be lost. Death means cut off from God. That's the meaning of spiritual death.

You will surely be cut off from God. And the first thing that the devil tells Eve is Genesis 3 verse 4, if you eat it, you surely will not die. You see the exact opposite.

The Lord says in Genesis 2, 17, if you eat of it, you'll surely die. The devil says you will surely not die. So what do we learn from that? He contradicts what the Lord says.

Okay, let me give you some examples now from the New Testament. In Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5, the Lord says, now this is exactly like God spoke to Adam. Now think of this.

This is what God spoke to Adam and Eve, and soon after the devil comes and contradicts exactly what God said. You surely die. He says you surely will not die.

Now listen to this. Jesus said, Matthew 5 and verse 22, I say to you that everyone, no exception, who's angry with his brother is guilty. How many of you believe with all your heart that you have anger in your heart? Ecclesiastes says anger dwells in the heart of a fool.

And I want to say to every one of you, if you've got anger in your heart, you're a fool, according to God's Word. Very serious. When God calls us a fool, if a man calls us a fool, it just means we're stupid.

But when God calls us a fool, we're on our way to hell. Everyone who's angry is guilty. Everyone.

What does the devil say? No, you're not guilty. It's just a normal thing. Sometimes you have to get angry.

And if you go further from that and say something to your brother in your anger, you're even more guilty. You go to the Supreme Court. And you don't stop there.

You go still more and you let your anger come forth again. And you call him something else. You'll go to hell.

You will surely die. You'll go to hell. So from that verse, I have taught anger is the first of three steps to hell.

It's there. First, you're guilty before the court, then before the Supreme Court, and the third step is hell. And what does the devil say? You surely will not go to hell by being angry.

Anger is a normal thing. You hear the voice of the serpent, exactly like in the Garden of Eden. This is the new covenant.

But I'll give you another example. The Lord says, verse 29, if your right eye makes you stumble, he's talking about 28. If you look at a woman with lust in your heart, this is for men, particularly all men sitting here.

You look at any woman with lust in your heart, you have already committed adultery. Already. And if it's your right eye that's causing you to commit adultery, pull it out.

Tear it out. Otherwise, verse 29, your whole body will surely go to hell. And the devil says, no, you will not go to hell.

You surely will not go to hell. You hear that voice? I'll tell you. The next time you're tempted to get angry, you will hear these two voices because you heard it today from the And if you're honest, you have to admit that many times you've listened to that other voice which says you surely will not die and continued in your anger at home with your husband, with your wife, with somebody else in the office, because you've heard the voice which said you surely will not die.

Or the next time you're tempted, and I tell you this temptation to lust is all over now. You can hardly go to the internet anywhere without being tempted. And everywhere on the streets and magazines and

everywhere, temptation, temptation to lust with the eyes.

And the Lord says it will take you to hell. And the devil is there shouting out loud, you surely will not go to hell. See, that is the difference between an old covenant Christian who says, I can be forgiven, the blood of Jesus cleanses me.

I can just go to him. I go 10,000 times a day. I can go to him.

He's forgiven me. And a new covenant Christian who says, Jesus came to save me from my sin. In the old covenant, the best they could experience was forgiveness.

They could never experience more than that. See Psalm 103. Psalm 103.

Psalm 103. This is David, the man after God's own heart, who says, Bless the Lord, O my soul. Verse 3, Who pardons all your iniquities.

He said, David, how many of your sins did God forgive? All. A-L-L. There was not a single sin of David's that was not forgiven.

Bless the Lord who forgives all my sins. At the end of the day, I can examine my heart. People teach that before you go to bed.

Search yourself. See if you're sinned in any way during the day. Excellent habit.

Lord, please forgive me. I lost my temper here. I lusted here.

I did this other thing over there. I got a little upset. Please forgive me before I go to bed.

Cleanse me in the blood of Jesus. Great. Excellent habit.

But if I'm doing the same old things again and again, now to 20 years, I'm still saying the same old thing, falling in the same old place, getting upset with your marriage partner in the same old way as you did 20 years ago. What sin has Jesus saved you from? Zero. What has He forgiven you from? Everything.

That is Psalm 103. That is the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant, Romans 6 and verse 14, Romans 6, 14 says, sin shall not rule over you.

In the Old Covenant, sin ruled over everybody. David, a man after God's own heart, committed adultery. Elijah, great prophet, got depressed and says, Lord, I'm fed up with my life.

Take it away. Great men of God were like that in the Old Testament. They could not overcome sin but because they did not have grace.

Here it says, the mark of... I mean, you could ask a 10-year-old child who can read English. Son, read this verse, Romans 6, 14, and tell me. It's a 10-year-old.

What is the mark of a person who has come under grace? Sin shall not rule over you because you are under grace. He'll give you the answer. Sin does not rule over a person.

Okay, from the same verse, you ask this 10-year-old, from this verse, my son, tell me, what is the mark of a person who's under law, the Old Covenant? Sin rules over him. He gets it from that verse. That one

verse, just one verse, says those who are under the Old Covenant, sin rules over them.

Those who are under the New Covenant, sin does not rule over them. They may fall, but they'll get up, but they'll come to a where they overcome it. It's not perpetually falling, falling, falling, falling in the same area.

They overcome it, and they come to the place where they experience grace in the beginning. We don't experience grace because we don't ask for it. We don't believe that Jesus was tempted like us and overcame.

In the Old Covenant, they didn't have an example. They only had exhortation, exhortation, exhortation, and I'll tell you this. You can listen to 10,000 exhortations from this pulpit.

You will not overcome sin until you see an example, and the example is Jesus, and not just one example. Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. We need living examples in our midst who are saying, I'm following Christ.

I've been listening to this message here for 10 years. I'm following Christ, and I've experienced that overcoming anger. I have experienced that overcoming of lust.

I've experienced that overcoming of bitterness. I'm not the same as I was before. I have learned what it is to be free from the Old Covenant and come to the New Covenant.

It's like saying, I'm under this roof. The rain outside cannot fall on me. Impossible.

If I go out of that roof, the rain falls immediately. If I'm under grace, Romans 6, 14, sin cannot have power over me. So when sin has power over me, it proves I'm not under grace.

If I did get wet under the rain, it proves, whatever you may say, you went away from this roof. That's why the rain fell. The great need in the New Testament is for honesty.

1 John chapter 1, verse 7. I don't have time for more today. We have to close. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God.

As God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And walking in the light means just being honest, first of all. That's the first step, being absolutely honest, not trying to hide anything.

People hide things in the dark. A thief does not like somebody turning on the light. Someone committing adultery does not like someone turning on the light.

Turning on the light is exposing sin, not hiding it. Be honest. Don't try to find some excuse for your sin.

You'll never overcome it. I tell you this, every sin for which you find some excuse, because it was this I did it, because of that I did it, I guarantee you'll never overcome it because you're not coming into the light. You're not being absolutely honest that you just gave in to that lust, whether it's anger or bitterness or theft or stealing or wrong attitude or gossiping or whatever it is, name it, adultery, dirty thoughts, whatever it is, be honest and say, Lord, I yielded, but I don't want to keep on like this.

Please help me to understand what it means to come under grace. And the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Grace. That's a wonderful blessing of the new covenant.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, grace comes upon us. It's called the Spirit of Grace. It's over us.

That's the only way you can ever overcome sin because then the Holy Spirit will show you how Jesus lived, and he'll remind you of that in the time of temptation and give me grace to overcome. My brothers and sisters, this is real. I've experienced it, and there are others here who are beginning to experience it.

I pray all of us will experience it. Amen.

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