



October 6, 2024

“Ever Increasing Trust”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Wednesday Evenings at Alêtheia 6:30-8:00

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For the Kids: What is sin? Instead of trying not to do bad, we can try to do good.

Paul concluded his Acts 13 sermon with explaining that Jesus was the Messiah and “that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed... and that “through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin” (Acts 13:38&39).

What is sin?

Vulgar:

Profane:

Prescribed & Proscribed:

There is an attitude of sin...

A better way to think of sin...

ACTS 13:40&41 ~

Why would Paul close like this?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Religious people inevitably think that human performance is important...

To them discounting human performance is blasphemy, but the more important human performance the less important Christ's performance... So, which belief is really blasphemous?

Habakkuk 1:5&6:

Context is indispensable in legitimate Bible interpretation.

God works in mysterious ways, so don't miss God by prejudging His actions. (Romans 11:11, Luke 7:30, Romans 9:20).

We are trying to learn Jesus, not trying to learn about Jesus.

ACTS 13:42-45 ~

Again, we the key to seeing God's handiwork is an openness to the form in which it might be displayed. Know Jesus...

The example of GNP's Logan Pass Boardwalk (I Corinthians 3:1-3).

I might try to conform to all the rules of Christianity, but still not know Christ. That leads to self-righteousness, looking down on those who don't obey as well as I, hating myself for my own failings, and resenting those who do better. That makes for a miserable, hypocritical, and unloving Christian.

Blaspheming in this sense is the contradiction of Paul's Christ-centered Gospel Message, it is the infamous "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" that is "unpardonable." sin" that you've heard tell of.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

The last time we were together we listened to Paul preach a fiery sermon in the city of Pisidian Antioch on what is called his first missionary journey. Pisidian Antioch was located in what is now west-central Turkey.

You might remember that Paul preached his sermon in the synagogue in Antioch on their first Sabbath there and that he concluded it with explaining that Jesus was the long-awaited, violently executed, but bodily Resurrected, Messiah and “that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed... and that “Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin” (Acts 13:38&39).

Sin is not really what most people think it is... or at least we can say that most people don't think about sin the way God does. What I mean is that we tend to think about activities that are considered to be vulgar or profane or what is prescribed and proscribed.

Vulgar means immoral, unseemly, inappropriate, nasty, even rude. Some Americans still have a sense of decency that they try to display in front of small children. Vulgar sins include things like sex outside of a Biblical marriage as one example.

Profane means sacrilegious, blasphemous, irreligious even wicked. Some Americans still hesitate to curse God. Profane sins include such things as denying the Lordship of Christ. What is prescribed is what you're supposed to do and what is proscribed is what you're not supposed to do. We are prescribed to be involved in church, and we are proscribed from gossiping.

All such things are sins sure enough, but that's not precisely what Paul was saying. There is an attitude of sin wherein all the sins possible are subsumed. A human disposition and inclination that encompasses all sin and it is that single tendency and penchant within us all that God through Paul is still driving home today.

It is our insatiable desire for autonomy. It is the original sin. It is our refusal to humbly trust God. We take control of our own lives thinking that we must be the masters of our own destiny and in so doing we selfishly act to control what is ultimately outside of our control... In a word that uncontrollable element is fear.

Fear swirls through our mind like a demonic fog and we will do nearly anything to drive it away even if for only a moment. It's fear of rejection, fear of accidents,

violence, conflict, disease, suffering, loss, pain, and ultimately death.

There is only one thing that can remove fear and that is the pure unconditional Agapê love of Almighty God. Only in abandoning our own devices and humbly trusting our everything to Him can we be set free from this body of sin and death. It is absolute and total dependance upon the completed work of Jesus on your behalf and that alone. To trust your eternity wholly upon the work of God for you require incredible humbleness and trust.

Will you abandon what won't work anyway and entrust all of your hopes and dreams to the only One Who can actually control the future? To the only One Who sacrificed so much for you? Or will you foolishly continue to struggle, kicking against the goad and exhausting yourself in a futile effort?

Your personal Creator Who also created the universe actually loves you and while His love for you is unconditional, it, by absolute necessity, comes with a boundary. The boundary is that in order for you to fully enter in to His Love you must accept it in the manner in which it is offered.

He offered it through His One and Only crucified, dead, buried, raised to life, ascended into Heaven and returning again.

Here's a better way to think of sin... When a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they can open themselves to His influence in conforming them to Christ. That conformity is the Fruit of the Holy Spirit. Act out and embody the Fruit of Unconditional Love for all, Unspeakable Joy in every circumstance, Perfect Peace with God, with others, and with yourself. Patient Patience with those who hinder your timeline. Humble Kindness towards all, Doing Good for others. Unwavering Faith in God no matter what. Faith that He is in control and that He knows what He's doing. Intentional Gentleness as in not trying to control others – not using others as a means to an end to put it in Kantian terms. A finally a summing up of all of that Self-Control... Like a full-grown Christian. Control your baser instincts to react in fear. Avoid sin by positively living by the Spirit.

We pick up the action in Acts 13:40&41, where Paul closed his sermon with this... 40Therefore, see that the thing spoken of in the Prophets does not come upon

you: 41‘Look, you scoffers, and be astonished, and perish; For I am accomplishing a work in your days, A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.’ ”

What a way to end a sermon. Why would Paul preach passionately about Grace in Jesus and then close with this in-your-face warning? Like any good speaker, Paul could read the room.

Here’s what I can tell you about religious people... They all believe that they’re good, or at least on the path to good. What a self-righteous, Goody Two-Shoes, legalistic, holier-than-thou, high achiever type cannot tolerate is the idea that someone can be saved apart from their own performance. Such a scheme diminishes the value of their efforts. What’s even worse, is imagining that low achieving lazy sows, those reprehensible underperforming, unwashed, irreligious scum of the earth could be equally saved apart from their performance as well.

It's unacceptably annoying to them that they would go to Heaven because of Grace alone. The notion that their superior efforts and their heroic sacrifice and their self-inflicted suffering doesn't add one tiny fraction of a

percent of their Salvation is intolerable to them. Then, like I said, the concept that vile, despicable, God-hating sinners could be redeemed after a lifetime of evil by simply embracing the Grace offered is doubly odious and abhorrent to them.

Paul could see the stiffening resistance to the Gospel by many in his audience as that Message became clearer to them... Under such an arrangement even Romans could be Saved without being extensively tormented and punished first. Believe in Jesus, no matter who you are and what you've done, or failed to do, and God welcomes you with open arms into His family forever? Blasphemy!

Paul warned them by directly quoting God's earlier declaration given to their ancestors over 600 years earlier through the prophet Habakkuk (hă-bă-kěk, חַבְקֻק (hăbäk-kük), in Hebrew. The prophet is crying out to God for an answer to why there is evil in the world. Yes, 26 centuries ago, people had the same questions that we have today.

God responded that he was going to raise up the Neo-Babylonian Empire also known as the Chaldeans, to punish the evil doers in Judah. Habakkuk was like,

“what? Hold the phone, God, what are You going to do?”

“You mean to tell me that I’m baffled by the evil all around me here in Judah and Your solution is to raise up a far more disgusting, despicable, vile, and evil nation to destroy Your chosen people in their own land that You gave them? That’s the plan to fix the problems in what is left of Israel?”

God said in Habakkuk 1:5&6, 5“Look among the nations! Watch! Be horrified! Be frightened speechless! For I am accomplishing a work in your days— You would not believe it even if you were told! 6“For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That grim and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth, To take possession of dwelling places that are not theirs.” God describes them and concludes with this assurance, “But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.” This is how God is going to do it, and it is so crazy from a human perspective – the way God is going to act that even if told, no one would believe that this was God’s plan.

There’s a lot we could talk about in that, but I want us to stay focused on why Paul chose this particular

passage to quote. Can I ask us to do that, to keep that focus in mind, but at the same time also notice the similarities for us today?

First, remember that back then, when a Rabbi, like Paul, quoted Scripture, he was referring the listener to the whole of the surrounding text and therefore to the context of the passage. He couldn't just give chapter and verse the way we do because there were no chapters and verses back then (as you can see in the photo). Context, for them, was indispensable as an essential part of understanding the point.

We modern Christians are constantly interpreting the Bible out-of-context because we have a mistaken idea that verses can stand on their own – they can't – they are artificial constructs of the last 500 years or so, strictly created for our convenience.

For us to fully get the point Paul was making we would need the context.

No Jewish person back in Habakkuk's day would have disagreed with him. All of them, regardless of how sinful they were personally, would have readily agreed that there was rampant evil in their nation, and in the

world beyond... mostly perpetrated by others, of course. But still, all of those Jews 26 centuries ago could have cried out with the Habakkuk asking God why He continued to allow such evil to persist.

In addition, all of the people would have been just as shocked as Habakkuk with God's response. What? You are going to use the Neo-Babylonians to stamp out evil in Judah? Really? To put it into better perspective it would be like us crying out to God asking Him why the Christian church in America is so divided, so distracted, so secular, and having God say, "I am going to raise up the radical anti-Christian God-haters and have them violently overthrow Christianity in America as a punishment, and as a purge, and as a purification that will result in a more focused church under that persecution."

We'd be like, "Oh, no, never mind Lord – we were just joking, please, ignore our silly plea. Actually, come to think of it, the church in America is doing great, God... We're good!" Right? We'd be thinking that God's plan was a bit extreme, if not outright crazy.

Now, here's the really important part... Without that foreknowledge, and apparently even with it, we would

look at that happening – that violent overthrow of Christianity in America by the thoroughly immoral crazies – and never in a million years think that it was God Who was behind it, orchestrating it all, ultimately for our benefit. We “would not believe it.”

I’m talking God’s people, whether the Jews 26 centuries ago, the Jews taunting Paul 20 centuries ago, or us here today, being beaten, murdered, violated, driven from our homes, by God’s worst enemies. We wouldn’t be sitting around saying, “Well, God’s pruning.”

Paul’s point in bringing it up at the end of his sermon was to remind the Jewish scoffers in his audience that God works in mysterious ways. Of course, it seems odd that God chose to send His Promised Holy and Anointed One as a self-sacrificing servant from Galilee who was murdered in Jerusalem.

The message was and still is, don’t, in your preconceived judgment and arrogant opinions, miss the orchestration of Almighty God. The next part is subtly profound... In the Neo-Babylonian destruction and deportation God used what was unholy to wake His people up to their own unholiness.

Paul was saying that God was about to do the same thing again, that God was going to bring in millions, perhaps billions of unwashed Gentiles – even Romans – into His family to wake up His children of Promise. To make the Jews jealous – to embarrass them by blessing their worst enemies with eternal Salvation through their Jewish Messiah. Paul said that very thing in Romans 11:11, the Jews “did not stumble so as to fall, did they? Far from it! But by their wrongdoing salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.”

One of my favorite passages in the Bible comes at Luke 7:30, “But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.” My dear friends, the religiously self-righteous are arrogantly opinionated.

They know for sure how God will act and their arrogance in their assumptions prevents them from actually recognizing God’s actions. Religiosity prevents humility, which thwarts discerning God’s actual purposes, which, of course, causes a person to “reject God’s purposes for themselves.”

Start with the attitude that God can do anything. You do that by bridling your own arrogance. It is arrogant presupposition to say that God must act in some particular way. I think the old Weymouth Translation captures the idea well in Romans 9:20, “Nay, but who are you, a mere man, that you should cavil against GOD? Shall the thing moulded say to him who moulded it, Why have you made me thus?” Cavil means to question, to quibble, to bellyache, to squawk and whine against God. Do we do that?

Here’s the more modern take by the Message Bible, “Who in the world do you think you are to second-guess God? Do you for one moment suppose any of us knows enough to call God into question?”

Again, the point is that only a truly humble person can be open enough to recognize when God is doing something unexpected. Only an unopinionated person can adjust to the unexpected. Why does God do that? He wants you relying on Him through faith in Him, rather than relying on your own wisdom and learning as we saw earlier.

Well, if that’s the case, why are we right now and every Sunday trying to become wiser by learning? Excellent

question. We are trying to learn Jesus, not trying to learn about Jesus.

Everything that I do here is an attempt to direct you to the actual One and Only Jesus Christ in order that you would know Him better. Relationally knowing the real Jesus really... Truly relating to the True Christ... That is the key to everything.

That's what we're learning. That's why this Christian education we do here is important. That's why it is essential to become wise. It is all to discern the Truth. Not the Truth about the Truth except to know the Truth – the Word of God which is Pure Truth – personally.

A Mormon, a Muslim, a Jehovah's Witness, a Jew... They all know about Jesus, and, to some degree, they all personally know Jesus... lite... Jesus distorted, Jesus drained of His position and power. They personally know a false Jesus only.

Now, the Truth is that even we know a distorted version of the True Jesus. How accurate must our relationship with Him be in order to be right? I assure you that if you have the indwelling Holy Spirit, you are Saved and therefore you know Jesus Salvifically. Fear not, but

even if that's true, shouldn't we naturally want to know our Lord and Savior better? Wouldn't the indwelling Holy Spirit encourage us that direction?

Beyond a more genuine relationship there is also the safeguard against falling into harmful attitudes, and behaviors that can occur, because, trust me, if we are not moving forward, we are moving backward. There is no such thing as status quo with Jesus. Things are improving or deteriorating, never stagnantly staying the same. So as the great Apostle Paul declared, “⁴⁰Be careful! Don't let the prophets' words apply to you. For they said, ⁴¹'Look, you mockers, be amazed and die! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it.'”

Moving on Acts 13:42–45, ⁴²As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people repeatedly begged to have these things spoken to them the next Sabbath. ⁴³Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who were speaking to them and urging them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴The next Sabbath nearly all the city assembled to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw

the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

Here we see the two factions clearly. The people receptive to the Gospel including “God-fearing proselytes,” meaning Gentiles in various states of conversion to Judaism on the one side and the more self-righteous, stubborn, opinionated Jews on the other side.

That’s noteworthy that the rejecters of the Gospel didn’t include the proselytes. Non-Jewish people learning about Judaism are by definition open to new ideas or they wouldn’t be investigating Judaism in the first place.

Again, we see the key to seeing God’s handiwork is an openness to the form in which it might be displayed. Know Jesus, become wise in that regard, and you’ll have the openness to evaluate the unexpected and the discernment to correctly categorize it. See what I mean?

If a person doesn’t know Christ intimately, they must protect themselves from error by being completely

closed off and opinionated. Such people miss God's movement all the time. The better you know the Savior personally the more open to ideas, events, and people you can be without jeopardizing the Truth. Knowing the Truth intimately enables you to assess ideas, events, and people, without getting lost in the woods.

I could take a non-woodsy city slicker to Logan Pass. Set them on the Boardwalk and tell them to stay on the path until reaching the overlook where they can look down and see Hidden Lake. There is a better than average chance that they will do just fine.

What I absolutely cannot do is tell them to continue down to the lake, hike to the far end, climb up and over the saddle to the southwest and go down onto the bench on the other side. Then traverse Sperry Glacier until reaching Comeau Pass and descending down from there to Lake McDonald Lodge. Only a person with a lot more knowledge, wisdom, and experience can do that. The non-woodsy city slicker would probably make a fatal mistake, but for the true woodsman it would be no problem.

I recently had a young relatively inexperienced civilian-only instructor pilot say that a maneuver I flew was

dangerous... And for him, with his skill level, aeronautical judgment and aviation experience, it is dangerous. When we are weak in something we are not as comfortable as the person who is strong in that thing. Judginess comes from fear, which comes from a lack of control, which comes from a lack of expertise.

Bottom line, it is completely up to you whether you want to be the person who is scared to death of getting off of the boardwalk or being the person who knows the wilderness so well that you can safely venture off-trail for a bit and then easily return to the boardwalk as a stronger more knowledgeable and experienced hiker.

To put it in Biblical terms let me take you to I Corinthians 3:1–3, where the Apostle Paul is writing to the Christian Community that he established in Corinth. He wrote, 1And I, brothers and sisters, could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as fleshly, as to infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to consume it. But even now you are not yet able, 3for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people?

The Truth is... there is so much division, strife, enmity, backbiting, hypocrisy, grumbling, and gossip among Christians because the vast majority of us get set upon the expansive boardwalk and are terrified to do anything other than stand right there. Some stumble forward in fits and starts shuffling ahead a little. Few run and even fewer become so familiar with the hike that they can get off the path and explore the trails alongside.

Look, I'm not talking about abandoning the trail – I'm talking about growing in Christ to the point that you'll get to the destination with a much richer experience that will better benefit others on their journey. You'll become an expert hiker and be able to share your expertise with others helping them to grow as well.

What I'm trying to say, is that we are trying to know Jesus and the better we do, the greater our freedom in Him and the greater our freedom in Him the better we can treat the people around us. If you are truly free in Christ, you have no need of tearing others down to build yourself up. If you are truly free in Christ, you have no need of tearing down the church in order to justify your neuroticism.

Let's grow in Christ so that we can eat solid food and grow in Christ even more attaining to that which He desires for us. That's not a level of expertise about Christianity, it's a level of relational intimacy with Christ. That's His desire. Not that you grow in spirituality per se, not the more precise performance associated with Christian maturity, but that you grow in knowing Him and as a natural consequence of that you will act more mature in a Christian sense as well.

Here's an example for clarification. If I don't know Christ very well, but I'm told that I can't enjoy anything other than hymns, that I can't dance, can't smoke, can't chew tobacco, can't drink beer, can't, can't, can't... And that I must go to church, must give 10 percent, must confess my sins daily, must, must, must. I might conform to all the rules, but I still don't know Christ and so I become self-righteous and look down on those who don't obey the rules as well as I, or I hate myself for my own inability to obey the rules and resent those who are able. Next thing you know, I'm the prototypical American Christian focused on the rules and as miserable and unloving as a human being can be.

On the other hand, I focus on knowing Christ and I find in Him true Grace and so the realization that there is

now therefore no condemnation of me while in Him at all. I'm set free from sin and death, and I live in Him. As I get to know Him better, I am being conformed to His image by that very process and the next thing you know I'm not a miserable unloving person and I find that I have little desire to do the things that offend others.

Back to our Acts passage... We see at the very end of verse 45 that the Jews "were Blaspheming."

Blaspheming in this sense is the contradiction of Paul's Christ-centered Gospel Message, it is the infamous "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" that is the one and only "unpardonable sin" that you've heard tell of.

The Holy Spirit ministering through Paul was saying that belief in the completed work of the Crucified and Resurrected Christ was the only way to be counted holy enough to enter into God's presence and the Jews were denying that Truth and so denying the Truth Himself.