



Breaking Barriers – Sin

Credits: David Powlison, Ed Stetzer, Mark Driscoll

COMMUNION

Act's 2:42, gives us a picture of the early church;

“They devoted themselves... to the apostles’ teaching... and to fellowship... to the breaking of bread... and to prayer... Everyone was filled with awe... at the many wonders... and signs... performed by the apostles. All the believers were together... and had everything in common. They sold property... and possessions... to give to anyone who had need. Every day... they continued to meet together... in the temple courts. They broke bread... in their homes... and ate together... with glad and sincere hearts.”

INTRODUCTION

How would you describe yourself?

- A) Sinner
- B) Saint

How does the bible describe you?

I find it so interesting... that when we look at scripture, we see that over 300 times, the bible speaks of the non-Christian as a “sinner” and... of the Christian as a “saint”

roughly 200 times... and it possibly refers to a Christian as a sinner maybe 3 times, but even those are unclear. Other language that the Bible uses to explain this change at the deepest level of our being includes:

- **Regeneration**
- **a new heart**
- **a new self**
- **partakers of the divine nature**
- **new creation**
- **new man**
- **alive together with Christ**
- **created in Christ Jesus,**
- **in Christ**
- **and a good tree that bears good fruit!**

Now please don't misunderstand me or misquote me... **Both Christians and non-Christians sin, but the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is in *his or her nature* – the deepest part of a person's being.**

For the Christian, sin may explain some of your activity, but not your identity. For the Christian, sin may explain some of what you do, but not who you are. For the Christian, you will sin some of the time, but are a saint all of the time. This is what the Apostle Paul means when he says,

- ***“Let us live up to what we have already attained.”* (Philippians 3:16)**

Over the past few weeks we have been building this wall of barriers- barriers between us and God, as well as barriers in our relationships. Now you may look at some of these boxes and say; *“Neil, in all honesty... I don't have a problem with racism, or, I am not judgemental. But... we all share the core root of all of these – Sin.”* So today I want to look at the barrier of SIN.

• **THE BARRIER OF SIN**

There is so much that divides us in this world – race, gender, economic status, social status, sports teams, politics, religion. Yet sin is something that we all have in common – and there is no one exempt... and no one immune from sin.

The apostle Paul says;

- ***There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,***

So we all start on equal footing – but, for those in Christ...

- ***²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* (Romans 3:24)**

The problem with sin... is that sin is a Barrier between us and God. God is holy – sin is offensive to Him and demands a punishment. Yet He also loves us... so through

Jesus... God Himself provided the solution for this barrier that is between us. God became a barrier breaker. His holiness still demanded that a sacrifice be made for our sins, so through Jesus, God Himself became that sacrifice... and took that punishment of death that was meant for us. So...

- **What is sin?**

Now this is heavy stuff. So please don't be put off by the terminology. But in basic terms, SIN is the things we do wrong... or... the things we should do... but don't do... our bad habits, or evil thoughts... these are offensive to God because He is Holy and perfect.

But Praise God - because He is holy and perfect... He also loves us enough to come up with a rescue plan. If He did not love you... He would not have bothered sending Jesus to die – He could have said, *“Ah well they messed up again, they are on their own now!”* But instead, though Jesus, God became a barrier breaking God. So today I've got just three points I want to share with you... here's the first...

- **JESUS BROKE THE BARRIER BETWEEN US AND GOD**

I think many of us know this... but it's important that we keep preaching it so that it truly sinks in... Jesus broke the barrier between us and God. Look at how Mark describes what Jesus did on the cross...

- **At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).**
- **³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” ³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.**
- **³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. ³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:33-39).**

You see... in the old temple... they had a huge curtain... some say it was about this thick! It was a heavy heavy curtain...and this curtain or veil kept the most holy place of the temple, where God was said to be, separate from where the people were, I know many of you know this... please follow along with me for the benefit of others... Only the high priest was allowed to enter at special times of the year, but even then, if he was not right with God, there was a chance he could drop dead. According to tradition the priest would wear bells and a rope...so if the bell stopped ringing... they could drag his dead body out!! Church... That is how serious the holiness of God is. Yet as a wonderful symbol, at the time that Jesus died... this barrier, that big curtain tore right down the middle. The barrier was broken and access to God was granted because sin had been dealt with.

So here is the significance of that what Jesus has done for us. Paul says in his book to the Ephesians...

- **In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. (Ephesians 3:12)**

How amazing... to think that we as sinful people, who mess up all the time, can approach THE holy God! Paul says to the Romans...

- **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2)**

When you and I approach Him... if we are in Christ... we find no condemnation because of what Jesus has done for us.

Jesus has broken the barrier between us and God. But here's the next thing I want you to see... yes...

- **JESUS BROKE THE BARRIER – BUT WE KEEP BUILDING IT UP AGAIN!**

Jesus broke down that sin barrier between us and God... and if we accept Jesus' offer of salvation... we have our sins forgiven and that barrier is gone. But... so many of us keep putting that barrier up again!!!! What do I mean? There are two ways that I see we keep rebuilding that barrier between us and God.

1) We keep on living in SIN

If we keep on sinning, despite knowing it is wrong... and despite knowing what God says... and we don't care what God thinks... we rebuild that barrier. John teaches...

- **²⁶ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷ but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.**
- **²⁸ Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.²⁹ How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot,**
- **who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?³⁰ For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31)**

Friends, don't deceive yourself. A life of deliberate sin, is a dangerous dangerous life. Don't think to yourself – "Oh, God is a God of love! I can live as I please!" No no no. Yes He is a God of love, but he is also a God of righteousness, and if you continue to live in wilful deliberate sin. There's something not quite right with your heart. The fruit of a heart surrendered to Jesus is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control. And if all that is spilling out of your life is sinful, somethings not right! And if you deliberately keep on sinning after you have received the knowledge of the truth, that's a serious problem. The bible says in that case – no sacrifice for sins is left! So I want to warn you... in the strongest possible way I can –

"Repent! Turn back to Jesus! And sin no more!"

Friends, stop living in deliberate sin. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

Here's another way we do it though...

2) We keep on giving in to TEMPTATION

Right, temptation. Now first up, I want to explain this to you. Temptation is not sin in and of itself. We see in the scriptures that Jesus was tempted, yet he did not sin. The old illustration to explain this is; that you can't stop a bird from flying over your head and dropping something on there... or in there... that happened to me in London the other day – it was really gross.

But... you can stop that bird from coming to sit on your head, and building a nest, and making itself right at home! You get my point? So let me share some truths about temptation with you. This is not my own stuff, there is so many great resources out there to help you. But let me share a couple with you today about temptation; Number one,

1. Satan is a real enemy.

2. Satan will H.I.T. you.

By that I mean, be particularly aware when you're hungry, isolated, or tired. How many of you find that your physical condition weakens your resistance to temptation? I do! I found it interesting that the temptation of Jesus happened when he was hungry, isolated, and tired.

So, be on your guard when you're isolated!

And be on your guard when you're tired.

3. Jesus Christ is your victorious Warrior-King.

Let me read to you one of my favourite texts, **Colossians 2:13–15**,

- **¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us;**
- **he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross!**

Jesus' victory is your victory. He's your victorious King.

4. The Holy Spirit is your power.

Jesus was filled and led by the Holy Spirit.

5. The Bible is your counterpunch.

Biblical truth is your counterpunch. Satan will lie to you. You need to know the truth. Jesus says this in his high priestly prayer in John 17, **"My prayer is that you protect them from the evil one. Father, sanctify them by the truth. Your Word is the truth."**

6. Escape is always possible.

What happens is, for some of us, the hook has been there so long, it's like, "I can't ever get free of it. But God would say, "Hey, there's a door over here that's open and you could walk out it and be free."

The truth is, you have two choices: the hook or the door. You either bite the hook or run out the door. Those are your only options. 1 Corinthians 10:13–14, **"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."**

What he's saying is this. When temptation comes, keep sharp. Look for the way out. There is a door of escape somewhere. There's a way out of it. Friends...

JESUS BROKE THE BARRIER OF SIN – BUT WE ALSO NEED TO DEAL WITH SIN IN OUR LIVES & RELATIONSHIPS

1) Don't hide in secret sin

Do you hide what you are doing? Hiding what you are doing and the time you spend doing it... is another clear tip-off that something is wrong in your life. Friends... Wrong doesn't love the light - unless it's already become shameless and brazen. We hide when we know something is wrong. When you create a secret garden of any sort in your life, mutant things inevitably grow. So we hide from the eyes of others, from the eyes of our own conscience, from God's eyes.

When we think our private sins will stay private, we are being deceived by the enemy. Preachers, politicians, athletes, celebrities—no one is immune. And friends, try as you may, somehow it always seems to come out at some point. Scripture is clear, of this you can be sure...

- **“Be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23).**

So then why are hidden sins sometimes undetected for so long? Well, I have a theory: I think Satan allows us to climb the ladder of success while continuing in private sin so that when we inevitably fall, our failure will be even more public and dishonoring to the cause of Christ.

How do we avoid the deception of secret sin? **First**, know that God knows. The Lord once asked the prophet Ezekiel,

- **“Have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark?” They claimed that “the Lord does not see us,” but they were wrong (Ezekiel 8:12).**

King David was right:

- **“O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you” (Psalm 69:5).**

Friend, your private sins are grieving the heart of your Father today.

2) Don't treat sin casually

Are you treating sin casually? If you are being nonchalant about your sin, let me remind you - You are a child of light—Children of the light don't walk in darkness! God's point of view is good, right, and true. He beckons you. Walk as a child of light—for the fruit of light is found in all that is good, right, and true. The God who invites us into what is good also warns us off what is bad.

You may be sure of this: everyone who is sexually immoral has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Don't let anyone deceive you with empty words. Because of these things, the wrath of God comes on the disobedient. That's the gist of Ephesians 5. Don't treat sin casually. The wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.

3) Take spiritual inventory

Ask God to reveal private sin to you before it becomes public. Take time today to do a spiritual inventory—get a sheet of paper and pen, and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind anything in your life that grieves your Father. Write down what comes

to your thoughts, and confess each sin specifically with a repentant spirit. Do this often!

4) Pursue holiness in all you do

Friends, we live in a world full of sin. If we want to be culture changing Christians, we must pursue God and purity. The ultimate answer is to stay so close to Jesus that his character and strength become ours. The psalmist wrote;

- **“Blessed are the people . . . who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face, who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted. For you are the glory of their strength” (Psalm 89:15-16).**

Oswald Chambers said; “True surrender” is being so close to Jesus... that “nothing ever appeals to you... that did not appeal to Him.” Are you surrendered to him today?

CONCLUSION

You see friends... each of these barriers we have looked at... are rooted in sin (turn each box one by one to reveal the word sin)

- **Geography** – disobeying God’s command to go into all the world. We want to stay comfortable, rather than going into all the world with the Good news. What lies behind that? SIN.
- **Racism** –thinking that any of God’s created people are less because of their race. What lies behind that? SIN. God created everyone – they are fearfully and wonderfully made, just as you are.
- **Culture** – looking down on people because they are different and do things different than you. What lies behind that? SIN.
- **Society** – setting up rules that are meaningless and divide unnecessarily into us and them. What lies behind that? SIN.
- **Despair**- Being so caught up in your own situation you can’t see God’s hand and His plan for your life. What lies behind that? SIN.
- **Religion** – making it hard for others to follow God with needless rules and hierarchy. What lies behind that? SIN.

- **Judging** – looking down on people, when only God can be your/ their judge. What lies behind... SIN?
- **Shaming** – Putting others down, to make yourself feel better about yourself. SIN
- **Fear** – not letting God be in control. What's that – SIN!
- **Strongholds** – letting hurts and past issues build into barriers between God & your relationships with others. Once again... SIN.
- **Past** – letting your history dictate your future, rather than handing it over to God? SIN.

Which barrier here reflects your sin tendency? We all have them, we lie to ourselves if we say we do not.

So what is your response today? Will you break down the barriers you have between you and God? Will you break down the barriers you have between you and others? Will you deal with the sin that is tripping you up?

DANCE.