



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Seven Deadly Sins

Part 1: Wanted: Sin

Tim Badal | August 7, 2016 | Romans 6:12-14



This uplifting sermon is going to make you feel so good about yourself! For the next eight weeks we're going to look at what the church for nearly two millennia has called "The Seven Deadly Sins." These aren't listed as such in Scripture, but they have become defined as the sources of all other sins. Every sin in this list is spoken about repeatedly in the Bible.

Over the next few weeks we'll look at each one of these sins: what they are, their impact on our lives and how they bring us into great struggle in our walk with God. But we're also going to learn how we might find victory over them. We'll look at biblical case studies where each sin is manifested in the life of a man or woman. Our hope is that as we consider how utterly sinful we are—and many of us may be deceived into thinking we're not really all that sinful—we will also see against the darkness of our sin how absolutely beautiful and glorious Jesus Christ is, how He has come to remove our sin and guilt and shame, allowing us to stand as righteous children before the God of the universe.

So our goal over these next two months is to learn what it means to be people who have been saved out of our utter sinfulness and brought into a place of grace. Today we'll look at Romans 6, where we'll consider our relationship with sin in general and why this is so important for us to consider.

Let's read **Romans 6:12-14**:

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

We see a lot of "Wanted" signs in our world which can bring to mind two very different things. The first thing is an invitation to something you would want. As an employer, sometimes I put out a "Help Wanted" sign. I'm looking for someone to help me in my company. This invitation says, "You're looking for something and I'm looking for you. If you need a job, you're coming to the right place." I'm telling the world I'm trying to find something I want.

But "Wanted" signs can have a meaning the exact opposite of invitation. Some of these signs are speaking of criminals. For example, J. Edgar Hoover, the Director of the FBI, put out such a sign looking for Al Capone. The sign implied that Hoover wasn't looking to hang out with Capone, or that Capone would fulfill some need, but rather that his reign of terror and gangster activity in the Chicago area would be stopped. They were looking for him so they could shut him down.

That issue of wanted with regard to sin is a decision that each of us has to make. What kind of sign are you putting out in your spiritual life regarding sin? Are you telling sin, "I want you. I invite you into my life to fill a need"? Or are you saying to sin, "I'm going to hunt you down, because I want to destroy you and stop your reign of terror in my life"?

You see, as followers of Jesus Christ, we must decide what kind of sign we're putting out for sin. Far too many of us say we want to stop sin—we want to mortify it so it never has a place in our lives. It's something we say on Sunday, but then when we're alone or with a group of unbelieving friends or in the workplace, where God seems distant, our actions go the opposite way. We welcome sin, applauding the opportunity to engage in it as if it meets something lacking in our lives. We say to sin, "I need you. I miss you, and I welcome you into my life." Is sin something we want in order to fill what is lacking? Or is sin—as the Bible tells us—something we are seeking to destroy in all areas of our lives before it destroys us?

1. Why should we talk about sin?

Why do an eight-week series focusing on sin? Let me give you five reasons.

We talk about sin because it applies to every man, woman and child.

Romans 3:23 says, "*For all have sinned...*" You don't need to be a Greek scholar to understand that the word "all" means all. It means every one of us has sinned. Many times our preaching team will ask, "What do we want to say to our people?" And we'll always include the question, "How does this apply to the different ages represented in our church? Does this sermon address the students in our midst, the young adults, those who are going through young family life? How about our older members, the empty-nesters, the elderly in our church? Will it apply to all of them?"

When we talk about sin—from the youngest to the oldest, man and woman alike—sin is an issue we all have.

Examining a set of sins over a prolonged period will enable us to better know our enemy and the weapons he uses in order to fight against sin.

We want to know our enemy and his weapons, so that we might gain victory over sin through the defense system God provides.

If we fight sin on our own, as though it simply involves a set of moral absolutes or some kind of behavior modification, this will not result in the real mortification of sin.

God does not simply intend to change our behaviors, but rather He desires to change our hearts. As we begin to look at the darkness of sin, we will understand how marvelous our salvation through our Savior is. If we never identify how sinful we really are, then our salvation will also not appear to be that great. If we think we just need a little help, a little "pick me up," then Jesus' death on the cross was overkill.

But if we recognize how absolutely offensive our sin is to a holy God—so offensive and ugly that He would put His Son on the cross to bear the burden of that sin—then we will stand in awe at what the God of the universe has done for us through Christ. We need to see the greatness of our Savior and His sacrifice.

We need to talk about sin because the Bible talks about it.

The word "sin" is mentioned more than 400 times in the Scriptures. It is one of the most frequently used words, and if the Bible speaks about sin this often, we should as well. If you consider other words such as unrighteousness, filthiness or the mention of particular types of sin, this brings the number of uses well into the thousands. Because the Bible speaks about sin, we should.

We need to talk about sin because it is what steals our joy.

God longs for His children to live lives of great joy because of the work of Christ. The devil knows that a child of God can never be plucked out of the Father's hand (John 10:28-29). He knows God has saved us and is in the process of sanctifying us, that "He Who began a good work in you will be faithful to see it completion" (Philippians 1:6). The devil knows that Scripture says we are untouchable regarding our salvation.

But even though he can't disqualify us from our salvation, because nothing can separate us from God's love, he can still make our lives miserable and make us unable to feel the confidence and joy to which we are entitled. He can fill our lives with so much filth and unrighteousness that we will never experience the blessings that come from being a child of God. In doing this, he helps disqualify us from impacting our communities, families and churches. We, therefore, must talk about sin.

Here's the problem: churches aren't talking about sin. So many churches in this generation have abandoned the subject of sin altogether. The pastor of one of the largest churches in the United States says this, when asked why he doesn't talk about sin:

“Sin is negative. I want to be positive. If I tell someone they have issues in their life that have to change, then they will fail to see the real champion they are.”

Let me remind you of a Christian truth: the only champion in this universe is Jesus Christ. The only One Who deserves glory and honor is the perfect One, Jesus. We need to recognize that there is no champion in us. The Bible makes it clear that we are blind, dead and held captive by the devil because of sin. That doesn't sound very “championing,” if you will.

Yes, the Bible is positive about a lot of things. It is positively sure that you and I are sinners. It is positively sure that we are on our way to hell. It is positively sure that without the blood of Jesus Christ being placed on our lives, you and I will spend eternity in hell. We can speak positively about sin because the Bible does. It is positive that sin will be your destruction and my destruction.

In a recent article in *Relevant* magazine, Scott McKnight asks, “Why doesn't anybody talk about sin?” He says:

To many, sin has fallen into grace. What does that mean? When we talk about God's grace, we are assuming the reality of sin—that we are sinners and that God has forgiven us. But in our language today, sin is not only an assumption, it's an accepted assumption. Not only is it an accepted assumption, it also doesn't seem to matter. It's as if we're saying, “Yes, of course we sin.” And then we do nothing about it. Widespread apathy towards sin reveals in itself the lack of interest in holiness.

You see, your grandparents' generation overdid it. Going to movies and dancing and drinking alcohol became the tell-tale signs of unholiness. Damning those who did such things became the legalistic, judgmental context for church life. So your parents' generation, inspired in part by the '60s, jaunted its way into the freedom of the Christian life—which meant, often enough, “I can do whatever I want because of God's grace.” That generation's lack of zeal for holiness has produced a trend today: acceptance of sin, ignorance of its impact and weakened relationships with God, people and the world.

We need to recognize that the only One Who can lead us in this discussion is God Himself, through the Holy Scriptures. What is troubling, then, is that even in a church like Village Bible Church we can fall prey to speaking about sin in a way that dishonors God and causes us to go down a wrong path of sanctification.

2. How do we approach sin?

The small group approach

Picture yourself in a living room with some wonderful Christians, sipping your coffee and eating pie. Prayer time comes along, or the discussion of the Bible comes around—and the issue of sin comes up. As Christians, we recognize that we're all sinners. I would imagine that if you've been around Village Bible Church long enough, you know that you are sinner in need of God's grace.

But while we recognize we're sinners, our tendency in our small groups is to make sure nobody knows how sinful we really are. “I want to be sure people don't think too lowly of me, because then they may not want to talk with me during snack time or sit next to me in small group. They may judge me, asking why I hold a certain position in the church. So when I talk about sin, I'm going to speak of it as a struggle or as a “quirky foible” or idiosyncrasy. It's just something odd about me, a sort of dysfunction.”

In other words, we admit to having sin, but we admit to it in a lighthearted way. We joke, “That's just who I am.” Instead of dealing with sin seriously, we play it down like it's just a fun little part of the game. We refuse to see it as a serious, soul-destroying plague that brings real-life consequences.

Because of this, the small-group approach to dealing with sin lulls us into a sleep of false security, with little sense of urgency that we must put to death the sin that's destroying our lives.

The support group approach

In the support group—whether it's Weight Watchers or Alcoholics Anonymous or any other group of this sort—your very presence in their midst is a means of confession. You're acknowledging you have a need, and that's good. In many ways, support groups are also incredibly honest. Unlike small groups, support group members are blatantly open about the struggle they're having with a particular vice or issue. So there's no problem speaking to the problems they're facing.

Their problem is that while there's always a place for public confession, very often there is little room for repentance or a real calling to a life change. We'll readily admit to being sinners. "I'm dirty, rotten and broken, and this sin in my life is eating me up." We join a group of people who have the same struggle and we talk about how messed up we are.

But a support group will do you no good unless it moves you from admitting your brokenness to the place where you realize that God has created you for something different, something more. We must leave our brokenness and learn to rely on Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross, being empowered by the Holy Spirit to say no to unrighteous things—those things we've now publicly confessed. We need to walk away from those things into newness of life, believing that God has empowered us to become righteous and no longer bound to sin.

The Pharisee approach

We love this approach, because it allows us to be hard on sin—just not our sin. Like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, we look at everyone else and say, "Wow, they're sinful and messed up and broken. I'm sure glad I'm not like them." We are quick to point out sin in their lives, but never to look at our own sin.

Of course, we don't want to sound like a Pharisee, because the Bible never speaks well of them. They made Jesus' life miserable. We as Christians don't want to do that. So to avoid appearing Pharisaical, we put on this phrase like a deodorant: "There but for the grace of God go I. I wouldn't touch *that* sin with a ten-foot pole. That's repugnant to me. How dirty you are, that you would be so far from God's goodness and grace. Oh, we're all sinners, but you are far worse than I am."

The Pharisee approach allows us to be hard on sin, but not our own sin. It keeps us from having to address our sin, while going over the top addressing the sins of those around us.

The horizontal-only approach

This approach was made popular in the '50s and '60s within the mainline and liberal denominations of the church. They would talk about sin, but instead of seeing it as an affront to God they began to talk about it as that which was an affront to one another. For example, they would focus on racism, saying the great offense of racism is that we hurt our brothers and sisters.

That's absolutely true, but let's remember that the greater sin that racism represents is not just against our brother and sister, but rather it is that which offends God. He has created all people—all nationalities and races—and instead of loving all whom He has created and said was good, we treat those of different skin colors or cultures as not good. That is first a sin against God, and then a sin against our brother.

But the horizontal-only view says this sort of sin never has to do with God. It says we must live at peace with one another, tolerating each other, loving each other—and if we don't, that's the great sin that's being committed. We are sinning against our brother or sister.

The vertical-only approach

This is something we do in the evangelical church. Unlike the liberal churches, who only consider relationships with each other, we take Psalm 51:4 as our key verse. After committing adultery and premeditated murder to keep Bathsheba as his wife, David says this to God: "*Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.*"

As evangelicals, we'll see our sin as simply between ourselves and God, and not as involving anyone else. When we see sin in this way, our response is then to throw up a prayer to God. "God, I confess my sin to You and I'm sorry for it"—and then we think it's taken care of. We claim, "If I confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive me and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The problem with the vertical-only approach to our sin is that we fail to realize that in addition to sinning against God, we've also sinned against others. David needed to go back to Bathsheba and say, "I've sinned against you. I violated you. I sinned against your husband—I killed him. I sinned against the people that I handed his death sentence to, who put him on the front line in battle. I sinned against Uriah's family. They're grieving the loss of their son, their father, their brother." David also sinned against the entire nation of Israel, bringing a reproach on them instead of being the king who was supposed to lead them with integrity and godliness.

There was no restitution or reconciliation. Yes, you and I have sinned greatly against God, but many times in committing these sins we have also trampled on our brothers and sisters along the way.

We need to recognize that none of these approaches accomplish what the Bible requires. All of them minimize sin, distorting our understanding and insulating us from realizing the manifold effects of sin. Most importantly, they rob us of a clear knowledge of the way God has called us to live as His followers

They also rob us of our joy. When we deny these consequences of sin, we miss out on the healing God brings to sinners. When we use the small group approach, we lose the opportunity to find our true identity in God. When we act like sin is something that “those people” struggle with, we forfeit the joy of knowing God’s gracious mercy that He would lavish upon us. When we fail to see that our sins alienate us from our neighbors—and also from a holy God—we fail to honor Him as the One Who has brought peace back into our lives by sending His Son to the cross.

Finally, when we fail to recognize that our sin is not only an affront to God but has also impacted the lives of those around us, then we fail to experience what real reconciliation feels like when we are forgiven by our brothers. Let’s stop kidding around, because we need to talk about sin and we must do this in a biblical way.

3. How does the Bible approach sin?

Sin is part of the very fabric of Holy Scripture. The Bible contains the story of God’s rescue mission to redeem rebels out of their sin and shame and guilt that has alienated them from Him. Jesus Christ was sent as a perfect Man to do what Adam could not do—to live a perfect life through the power of the Holy Spirit and to conquer sin and death once for all.

Because of that, we now have the newness of life that gives us the power to say no to sin, unrighteousness and worldly lusts, giving honor to God in everything we say, think and do. You see, without us considering the true weight of sin, we will never understand the glory and goodness of the grace of God. That’s why we have to deal with sin. But how do we do it?

This week was the opening of the Olympics—and they have been shrouded in great fear. Rio is under a strict warning, requiring people to have all sorts of insect repellants on their bodies when they leave a building. If any part of the body is uncovered, repellants must be used because of the Zika virus. We aren’t fully aware of how it’s contracted, how far it has spread, its ramifications once someone catches it, or what it will do to our population. Many of the athletes who had planned to take part in the Olympics this year made the decision not to go because of these fears.

So it is with sin. We can, out of fear, continue to play the status quo or try to run from it—or we can investigate it. We can seek to understand what sin is, where it came from, how it’s spread, the effects it has on our lives and how we can be saved from it. These are our goals. So let’s answer some questions that we’ve raised.

The Explanation: What is sin?

There are a variety of possible definitions of sin, especially if we choose to define it on our own terms. While there may be some merit to our collaborating with each other to find a definition, because God is the One Who is preeminently offended by sin we should probably seek His opinion instead. The Bible speaks of sin using a lot of different terms. It says it is bad, evil, guilty, filthy. It speaks of it as unrighteousness, trespassing and going astray. Most frequently Scripture uses the Greek word *hamartia*. This word, usually translated as “sin,” literally means missing the mark.

Speaking of the Olympics, this phrase is a reference to the sport of archery. The archer uses his bow and arrow to aim for the bullseye on a target. More than simply hitting the target, from a far distance he wants to put his arrow into the small center circle on the target. This means everything has to be perfect: how far he pulls back the bow, the force with which the arrow leaves the bow, the wind, the straightness of the arrow. Everything has to be right for him to hit the bullseye.

Romans 3:23 reminds us of this *hamartia* when it says, “*For all have sinned...*” In other words, all have missed the mark and fallen short of the bullseye of God’s glory. Every one of us has the opportunity to pull back the bow, intending to hit the mark. We think we can do what nobody else has done. But when we line up—and God says, “There’s the bullseye, My perfection”—we pull back the arrow and we miss.

You might say, “Well, at least I hit part of the target. Some might think, “Badal? He just shot into left field. He wasn’t even close. I feel pretty holy, because he didn’t hit the target at all. At least I’m somewhere in the area.” That’s the Pharisee approach. But God says it’s not good enough just to hit the outside ring of the big target. He requires us to hit the bullseye—and none of us can hit it.

God says, "If you don't hit the bullseye, you're going to hell." We must realize that no matter how close we think we are to the bull's eye, if we're not in it, that doesn't count. The Bible says, "All have missed the mark. Nobody hits the mark. Nobody gets it."

This describes our inability to appease our holy God. He challenges us to try again. We pull back the bow and shoot the arrow—and we miss again and again. Every day we get up and miss the mark. Every day we think, "I'm going to hit the mark." But we miss every time. We are unable to appease a holy God. We can't do what we're required to do. We blow it every time.

A second word the Bible uses for sin is *anomia*, another Greek word which literally means iniquity. It tells us that sin is utter rebellion or lawlessness. At the very heart of who we are, we are rebels. We're criminals. We, like Al Capone, are wanted by a holy God. Not in the sense of an invitation to enjoy His favor, but in the sense that God will hunt us down because we have offended Him. We have broken His law and now we are fugitives in need of punishment. In our iniquity, we miss the mark.

If we put the two words *anomia* and *hamartia* together, it means we have missed the mark by choosing to rebel against God instead of staying with His plan in perfect obedience. God says, "I want you to do this. Here are your marching orders," but we go the other way. We don't want to do things His way or in His timing. We don't want to wait for His perfect plan. We say, "I'm going to do it myself." Our rebellion tells God, "You're not God—I am. You be quiet, God. I will do it my own way, when I want and how I want."

The Bible speaks of sin in a third way that refers to its depravity. Depravity as it's used in Scripture indicates that something is being corrupted or spoiled and will one day be destroyed. If we combine depravity, iniquity and sin—*hamartia*—we arrive at the biblical definition of sin. Sin is missing God's perfect mark by willfully rebelling against God's commands and pursuing something that corrodes and spoils our souls to the point of utter destruction. God has a perfect plan for us. He's commanded us to live that way. But instead of following His ways, we willfully say, "God, I don't want it. I don't need You. I'm going to do it my way." And even though God is offering beauty and wonderful blessings, we say, "I'd rather have this garbage heap of sin. I know it's going to rot me to the core, but I'd rather eat garbage than sit at Your table with the finest of fare." So I eat the garbage, and in the moment that I eat it, I learn something about myself and my sin: that because of it, I will surely die. That is exactly what Adam and Eve felt in the Garden. "Don't eat from that tree." "Why?" "Because I'm giving you every other tree. You can do whatever you want with everything else, but this one thing: don't eat from this one tree." "God, we don't like Your rules. We don't like Your ideas. We don't like the ground rules You've set—so we're going to do it our way." And in that moment when they ate of that fruit, they learned it was true: they would surely die.

The Entrance: When did sin start?

How did sin enter the world? Turning to Romans 5:12 we read, "*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*" Here we learn that sin came into the world through one man, Adam. His crime? Rebellion against God. The first man sinned, and his transgression has spiraled down to every one of us. Each of us has been impacted by that singular fall, and it was a sin we weren't even a part of.

Sin is so sick and so powerful that it never impacts just the sinner. It always affects others. The Bible says sin defiles many. In the Garden when our representative Adam fell, he didn't just defile himself. He defiled Eve. He defiled his children. He defiled his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren. And hundreds of generations later, we find ourselves impacted by that one sin.

But where did Adam get it? We know that in the Garden Adam was tempted by the devil. Ezekiel 28:13–15 speaks figuratively of Satan, who was an angel created without flaw. He was created to be the chief of all angels. Verse 15 gives us a hint as to the origin of sin. Speaking of Lucifer, the devil, in his angelic state in heaven, God said, "*You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you.*" Where did sin come from? The heart of Lucifer, as an angel, the chief cherub in God's angelic army.

In another passage, Isaiah 14:12–14 indicates that Lucifer sinned in his pride and began to covet God's place of authority and His throne in heaven. When he rebelled against God, a third of the angels believed he could do it. That's how powerful he was. God said, "Sin will not reign in heaven," and He plunged into hell the devil and those angels who then became demons.

Some of you would say, "Wait a minute. Sin wasn't just found in Adam. It was found first in the heart of Lucifer. God created Lucifer, and if God created him with the ability to sin and Adam with the ability to sin, then God is therefore the Author of sin." No. That's bad theology. While the Bible doesn't tell us how sin entered into the life of Lucifer, and while we can't understand why a blameless creature would one day come up with a sinful thought, Scripture makes it clear in the book of James that God is

the giver of all good things. James says God cannot tempt, and when someone falls into sin, he falls into it by being tempted by his own desire.

Listen to me. The entrance of sin into your life and my life cannot be blamed on God. It cannot be blamed on the devil. It can't be blamed on our parents. It can't be blamed on our pastor. It can't be blamed on anyone else. When we are enticed by our own desires, we fall into sin. Sin is your fault and it's my fault. The entrance of sin into our lives falls squarely on our shoulders.

The Extent: How far has sin spread?

Let's consider the extent of sin. Romans 5:12 says it didn't just spread to one person. Rather, it says, "*Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*" Every one of us has a virus running through our veins—the virus of sin. Because of that virus, all of us have rebellion running through our veins.

One of my friends just welcomed a new grandbaby into the world, a beautiful little boy. So precious. So cute. So innocent, right? Wrong. That little stinker is the epitome of selfishness. Me, me, me, me. The greatest victim of that selfishness is Mama. Mama cares. Mama nurtures. Mama has shared very personal space with this creature. When the baby comes out he doesn't arrive with a bouquet of flowers and a thank-you card. "Hey, I know the last nine months have been hard, but I want you to know I love you." No. What does the baby do? He comes out and says, "I hope you've had plenty of sleep, because you aren't going to see any more of that! I'm going to drive you crazy—because it's all about me."

My wife said, "Be nice to the babies. They don't know what they're doing." That's a mother talking. See, moms, you drank the Kool-Aid. They're coming at you—and you still love them, God bless you.

But that's what the Bible says. David tells us we were conceived in iniquity and we were brought forth in sin. We start out with ignorant rebellion and selfishness. But your child gets older. You're enjoying a wonderful day shopping at Aldi, and everything is going great. You're picking up your groceries and you get to the check-out line where the gummy bears are. And your kid grabs the Aldi gummy bears. You say, "No, dear, not today. We've got lots of good stuff, but no gummy bears." The kid falls down as if he was having an epileptic seizure. Right? You tell yourself, "That's his free spirit." No! That's sin. And the sin of that epileptic seizure in the Aldi aisle will turn into deeper sin when he becomes a teenager. And eventually it will become all manner of things—fornication, adultery, lying, cheating. Listen. From the moment of conception, you and I were brought into sin and it spreads from there.

When I was in the fourth grade—I'm revealing my age, because these diseases don't even exist anymore—we had a disease called chicken pox. In the fourth grade I contracted chicken pox, and the doctor said I had one of the worst cases he had ever seen. The pox was all over my body. I don't mean to be gross, but there wasn't an inch of my body that wasn't affected. It drove me nuts for two weeks.

So it is with sin. There's not a part of your being that isn't impacted by your sin. That means sin has spread so far that there isn't a part of who you are that it doesn't touch. The way you talk. The way you plan. The way you spend your money. The way you dream. The way you address issues and struggles in your life. How you express your sexuality. How you invest your time. All of these are impacted by your sin and mine.

But we don't want to talk about it. We want to downplay it, but we carry around the pox of sin all over our bodies. Like a bunch of ignorant fools, we look at each other and say, "You look good. I look good." And while nobody's looking, we are scratching, dying, because every part of our body is affected by that disease.

The effects: How does sin stain?

We have to deal with sin. How does it stain us? Death comes into our lives. Sin brought death into the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve sinned against God. God had told them, "The moment you eat of that fruit, you will surely die." Well, did they die right then? No, they went on to have pretty good lives. They had children. To be sure, there was an issue when one child killed another—which was a consequence of sin—but for the most part I think Adam and Eve lived a pretty happy life. Just as you and I, by God's common grace, share a wonderful life as sinners in a world that an almighty, holy God created.

So how did we die? Well, we know we will physically die. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death." There is a 100% guarantee. Death bats a thousand. We all are going to die. Nobody in this room can say, "You know what? Those dark ages were tough when I was living through them, but things are looking pretty good." No. At around a hundred years, if we're lucky, we're all going to die—because sin brings physical death.

It also brings death to relationships. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, they went running for the hills. They heard God coming, and they ran—why? Because they were filled with guilt and shame. When we sin, we bring guilt, shame and reproach into our lives, and as a result we know we can't be in fellowship with a holy God. So we run, because we know we can't have a relationship with Him while we're holding on to sin.

Finally, death will come to us when as sinners we are confined to an eternity without God in hell. Sin is so bad that when it goes unpaid, it renders a sinner worthy of eternal conscious punishment in hell in utter misery and pain. It will be an eternity under the wrath of almighty God. There are no words in the human language to speak of God's utter hatred for sin. This leads to one final question.

The Expiation: How are we saved from sin?

There's a word we don't hear very often. It's the word "expiation." In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are given this hope: *"For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God."* I hope that by now you're asking, "Where is the hope?" That hope is in Jesus Christ.

You see, sin is a cancer that affects us so badly that there is no human cure. We are all carriers and are all succumbing to its power without hope. Then Jesus came—at just the right time and in just the right way—to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He came to bind up the brokenhearted and to set the captives free (Luke 4:18). But in order to do that, He had to do something Adam couldn't do, that Moses couldn't do, that David couldn't do, that the prophets couldn't do, that John the Baptist couldn't do—and that none of us can do. He had to hit God's perfect mark of holiness. And for 30 years, Jesus did that. Tempted by the devil, He remained pure. Scorned by the people around Him, He remained pure. Betrayed by those who said they loved Him, He remained pure. In order to do what? To go to a cross and to become sin on our behalf.

Jesus lived a perfect life, and what He deserved was absolute praise and glorious adulation from heaven and earth alike. What did He get? Scorn, mocking, abuse, beatings—and finally He was hung on a cross to die a sinner's death. And when He did, God poured all His righteous wrath, indignation and punishment on His one and only Son. Jesus embraced and took upon Himself the wrath of God so you and I might experience His grace, His love and His mercy. In the words of hymn writers Keith Getty and Stuart Townend:

In Christ alone! who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones he came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied—
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

You have a decision to make today. If you are a sinner who has never bowed the knee to Jesus, today is the day of salvation. Don't go to hell. Don't try to deal with your sin on your own. Give it to the One Who can save you. Give it to the One Who can make you new. Give it to the One Who can love you in spite of who you are; Who can take away your reproach and filth and make you as white as snow. If you don't know how to do that or what it involves, please contact me or any of our leadership team or staff. Pull someone aside and ask them to tell you more about this salvation.

For a follower of Jesus Christ, this sermon should call you to deal seriously with sin—not to sugar-coat it, but to see it as God does. Instead of living in guilt, live in hope—hope that Christ now intercedes as your Savior each and every day. And one day, when your eyes close and your brain ceases to function, He will welcome you into His presence for all eternity, and you will experience the goodness of God's great love for you.

Let me close with words again from "In Christ Alone," which remind us of this amazing love:

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,

Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove
All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.
Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.net).