

From Glory to Glory: The Transforming Power of God

Preacher: Treavor K.

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References: **Ephesians 5**, 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 7:18-20; Mark 7:15; Genesis 4:7; Psalm 23:1; 1 John 4:19; Ephesians 4:30; Isaiah 53:5; John 3:16; 1 John 1:9

Introduction

No backsliding. This will be interesting, because I wander a little bit. Let's open our Bibles and we'll start in Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5. It's nice to be with you this morning, and open God's word, and remember the Lord with you all, as we think about who we—where are we? We're in Christ. It's a good place to be. It's the best place to be. And as we consider that, we would like to think about what Christ is doing. Verse 25 of Ephesians 5. Thank you.

[Ephesians 5:25-27 NKJV]

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

We'd like to read also in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18.

[2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV]

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Lord will bless the reading of His word to us this morning.

The Business of Transformation

The Lord is in the business of transforming our lives. He's in the business of changing us to be more like the Lord Jesus. And so we might ask ourselves the question: what is sin doing in our lives?

Last night, I spent a good part of the evening in the emergency room at Vancouver General Hospital. And there was this man with the most grotesque, ugliest looking spots on his hands and his arms and his face—that's all I could see. They weren't bound up, and assuming it was some sort of infection or skin cancer that had gone really bad—and he was being a typical man and not wanting to go to the doctor and see what it's all about—they were blemishes. They were spots. And that's what Paul is using as a metaphor for sin in our eyes. They're things that make you and I ugly spiritually. They make us grotesque. They're things that we don't like to see.

And the Lord is in the business of cleaning us. He's taking away all those ugly things that make people think of other things other than Jesus. And so He sees that great big, red, swoosy sore on the fellow's hand spiritually. What are the things that you touch? What are the things you do with your hands that you shouldn't do? And the Lord is in the business of cleaning them and making them so they're beautiful in His sight.

And so this is the transforming power of God in our lives. And He's able to take something that's ugly and grotesque, says Ecclesiastes, and make it beautiful in His time. He is the sovereign God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we're able to ask or think of. What we're able to even imagine God can do is what God is doing in our lives, transforming your life and my life from glory unto glory. And we'd like to consider how He does that and how we can assist God in that work, because we're co-laborers with the Lord. And God is a gentleman. And God doesn't do things without our permission. And so we'd like to think of a few of these things. We've seen them sort of in the book of Romans; we've seen them in the book of Galatians. There's several ways that people sort of see sin. Okay.

Two Extremes in Viewing Sin

One of the ways people see sin is they don't think sin is very awful. They don't think sin is very horrible. They don't think sin is a big deal. And so in English, we sometimes, when we lie and it's just a little lie, we say it's just a little lie—as if the size of the sin matters. Does the size of the sin matter? Or is it when we sin and fall short of the glory of God, that's enough to keep you and I out of heaven if we haven't believed in Jesus as our Savior? And so some

people judge sin by its size or its quantity: "Oh, I only sinned once." And if I only did it once, that is no big deal. No.

Well, what if someone were to kill your only child? It's only one. Does that make a difference? It does make a difference. One—one killing is still murder. You could kill one person or you could kill 10,000 people, you're still a murderer. But if the size matters... So if you kill somebody big, well, that's a murder. But if you kill somebody small—a midget, a baby, a child—well, that's not murder because it wasn't very big. Do any of those two arguments make any sense? So, "It's just one," or "It's just little"?

But sometimes in the lives of Christians, they don't think sin is exceeding sinful. And so we get these ideas, and I was driving down 33rd Avenue towards Granville Street, and I saw this orange door and a red door and a yellow door and a green door, and it said in different languages, ouvert, which means open, and it said open in English, and it said ouvert in French and some other languages I didn't understand. And they don't think sin is exceeding sinful. And so you get this liberal attitude that sin isn't very bad and we can tolerate sin in society. And that's one of the extremes.

The other extreme is—an extreme that we don't get—is when Christians don't understand how complete and how great and how massive and how perfect the sacrifice of Jesus was on Calvary's cross. And as I'm being careful not to go backwards and I go forward sideways, Roy's finding my microphone's not working very well. Do you understand that?

So they add to what Jesus did. "You have to be baptized to go to heaven," some people say, because Jesus' work was not enough, they say. They say you have to give your tithe, you have to go to church, you have to do this and you have to do that, you have to celebrate on Saturday, you have to go and witness for two hours every month selling these magazines or giving them away, and you pay for them. You have to wear a dress. You have to wear a suit. You have to, you have to, you have to, because if you don't, you won't go to heaven. And people underappreciate what Jesus did on the cross.

And so one of the things that you and I need to do is we need to understand how horrible sin is, and we need to understand how great the salvation that Jesus gives is. And if we can do those two things, we're going to sort of see ourselves in Christ. We're going to see ourselves in this new and living way. We're going to see ourselves, as Harold Summers was bringing us this morning, into the very holiest presence of God.

Entering the Presence of God

I still love one of my favorite things I think I ever read outside of the Bible, which was Harold St. John. It's spelled St. John. And he writes, or his daughter writes, that her father said that when the spear went into Jesus' side and water and blood flowed, it indicated that the way to the very heart of God was now open. The veil was rent in two. And the way was opened through the body of Jesus Christ dying on Calvary's cross, that you and I, by believing in the Lord Jesus as our Savior, can be in His very presence. Eric Peterson was saying we're accepted in the beloved one. We are reading from Psalm 23 that the Lord is my shepherd.

[Psalm 23:1 NKJV]

The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

And we put that emphasis on **my** shepherd. He might be someone else's, or he might not be somebody else's, but he's **mine**. "Oh, I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." This is where we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we understand that, we start to get a glimpse.

The Dwelling Place of Sin

So, let's start in Romans, or continue in Romans chapter 7. Just turn back a few pages from 2 Corinthians to Romans 7. You see, Paul had this problem. Look in verse 18. This is Paul. He's been saved. He's written Galatians. He's probably written 1 and 2 Corinthians. Now he's writing the book of Romans. And sometimes those orders, we don't know exactly which order, but it says in verse 18:

[Romans 7:18-20 NKJV]

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Where does sin dwell? Does it dwell in your neighbor? Well, yes. Does it dwell in the government? Yes. Does it dwell in you? The Bible says yes. We would think about Mark. Jesus would say in Mark 7:

[Mark 7:15 NKJV]

There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.

The Predator at the Door

It's dwelling in us. Sin is part of who we are. Do you remember several years ago, Joe Reese was doing a series on doors in the Bible? And the first mention of the word door is in Genesis chapter 4, where it says sin is crouching at the door. So where is it first? It's in ourselves, and it's crouching at the door.

[Genesis 4:7 NKJV]

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

It's desiring to have you, but you must rule over it. So it's crouching, it's hiding, it's sneaky, it's there. I've done a little bit of hiking this year, and one of the things we do when we're hiking is we look around. They say—I don't know who they are, but they say—you will never see a cougar attack you. It will come in by surprise. If you see the cougar, it's very probable he won't attack you, or she, unless there's some mental distress or some physical distress that's making their behavior different than normal. But if you see it, it won't attack. But these are crouching. They're hidden. They're ready to pounce. They're in this small, compact, unnoticeable thing.

And it's ready to pounce and it's desiring to have you, but you must rule over it. And when it looks small and it looks hidden, it doesn't seem as dangerous as it is. But, beloved, sin is **dangerous**. Sin just doesn't... you don't do sin and it doesn't do anything to you. You do sin, and if you don't repent, it hardens your heart. It sears your conscience. These are the horrible things—that it starts not to bother you, that it bothers God.

So sometimes we say, "I'm pretty sharp. I'm not ruthless. I'm not cheap and stingy." Unpretentious—"I'm not obsessed with how I look; I just prefer to be well-groomed." We

make the sin smaller than it is. And it's crouching as a predator, seeking whom it may devour. Because when sin does its work in us, it doesn't just go away. It becomes part of us. And it binds us more and more. And it weakens our will to resist.

Superficial Sorrow vs. Heart Transformation

And you know, if we don't understand who we are in Jesus Christ, we might just throw in the towel right then. You know, some people, they try to avoid the consequences of sin. Right? Not avoid sin, but avoid the consequences of sin.

I knew this fellow who assisted one of the assemblies in Mexico, and he would sin like the devil from Monday to Saturday. He would sow sin in his life and other people's lives, and then on Saturday night he would pray for a crop failure. He did stealing, and he didn't want to get caught. He did fornication, but he didn't want to get married or be a father. He did all sorts of evil, and his only worry was the consequence of the sin. And if you're only worried about the consequence—"Well, I'm not going to do that because this is going to happen"—there's never going to be a profound change in our lives. It's always going to be superficial. It's not going to be the intense, overpowering, heartfelt, eternal transformation that the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives.

Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, didn't he? It sort of appears that he was sorry for his sin, but he really wasn't sorry for his sin. He was sorry about the consequences of his sin. Probably never in his wildest dreams he imagined that showing who Jesus was and betraying him with a kiss was going to lead to his death. And when that happened, he took the money back. But he was just concerned about the consequences of his sin.

King Saul, he even prayed that he was sorry to God. And then he still wanted to be glorified as king and not lose his kingdom. Demas, he loved the world. And he abandoned Paul. He didn't really care about what sin was, just the consequences of it.

A little later in chapter 4 of Genesis, there was a man named Lamech. He even bragged about his sin. He was proud and had lots of pride: "This is my sin. And if Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." What did Jesus say about seven times seventy? He said, don't forgive just seven times, but seventy times seven times. That's what a great work He does.

The Root of the Problem

And so it's not something that we try to stop superficially. It's not that we're the story of the little engine from the train that said, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." It's not

positive thinking. It's not positive vibes. Sin is **awful**. It's not just the consequences of sin that are awful. Sin is **awful**.

In Mexico, we have these trees called eucalyptus trees, and you can chop the top down, but it still keeps growing—sort of like a willow tree here. You can just knock the whole thing up and it just starts coming out. You ought to get rid of the roots or it springs back to life. And you and I, we can be Christians in our heads but not in our hearts, because we need to really understand that God loves you because He loves you.

[John 3:16 NKJV]

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Why? Because God is love. He so loved the world. There's no selfish motive involved. We love God because He first loved us, says 1 John 4:19.

[1 John 4:19 NKJV]

We love Him because He first loved us.

Not because of what He does for us or what He gives us in answer to prayer, but we love Him because He loves us. Because He's beautiful. Because He's God. We think of how in God's presence there's fullness of joy.

Seeing Sin Through God's Eyes

And when we sort of understand that God loves us, and He loved us while we were yet sinners, how much more does He love you and me, now that we're sons and daughters of God? Because to as many as received Him, gave He the authority to be called the children of God, the sons and the daughters of God. And He loves us.

When the girls were growing up—and sometimes even when they're big—sometimes they do something silly. And it makes me a wee bit angry, but it doesn't take away my love for them. It makes me angry and makes me feel sad, and sorry that they chose to do something that was silly. But I still love them. And even though sometimes we sin in our lives, and it grieves the very soul of God Himself, He still loves us. And when we confess our sin:

[1 John 1:9 NKJV]

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So the way to have a heart change is that we need to see sin as something that grieves God's heart. In Ephesians 4:30, it grieves Him. The Spirit of God is grieved.

[Ephesians 4:30 NKJV]

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

And sometimes I do silly things. And I look into someone's eyes, and I see them glassed open with tears, and I realize that I've hurt them. We need to lift our eyes up to the mountains and then a little bit higher. Look into the eyes of God. And when you see the tears of the One who loves you, it begins to transform your life. The joy of the Lord needs to be your strength, for in His presence is fullness of joy. Even though we grieve Him, we can make Him happy and ungrieved again. We confess our sin and He cleanses us:

[1 John 1:9 NKJV]

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

It's a marvelous thing that God does. He bore all of our sins on the tree. There's not one left that has to be paid for. All the decrees that were against us were nailed to His cross. All the curses that were against us—He took all of our sin away.

The Reality of Christ's Separation

Harold Summers was talking about being at the temple in Jerusalem, and the Jewish men covering their heads and complaining that Harold's head wasn't covered. Do you know a man's covered head is a sign of shame? Jesus, for the joy set before Him, despised the shame. He took it all away. All the things that cause you and I embarrassment and shame, He bore it all. The things you don't want anybody else to know, the things that made your face go red and your ears heat up—He bore it all away. He took all of our sorrow. He's a man of

sorrows, acquainted with grief. And when we realize all that Jesus has done on Calvary's cross, it gives us the courage to face our sin. To not try to sweep it under the rug. That would be so unlike Jesus. It would be so unlike God to ignore sin.

But as we walk with God, we see the sin. We see the separation. We understand the grief and the sorrow that sin causes. The further we are from God, the more we are from God, we don't get it. The closer we are to God, the more it grieves us too.

And Jesus, when He was in the garden in Gethsemane, He sweat as it were drops of blood, didn't He? Why? The doctors and the physicians, they would tell us it's because of extreme stress. Now this is before Jesus was nailed to the cross. Why would Jesus have stress? Because Jesus had never, ever been separate before. He had never been isolated before. He had never been forsaken before. He was the Man who knew no sin, who did no sin, in whom is no sin, forever. And He was going to be made sin for you and for me. And He thought that was such a horrible idea that He sweat as it were drops of blood at the very thought of being separate from God. Well, it's our sin that separates us from God, and He thought it was so horrible that He was sweating drops of blood.

What do we do when we sin? Some people plan to sin—did you know that? And they think nothing of it. And some people sin and they don't even know it. Some people sin and it's just a little thing, no big deal.

I was trying to get a hold of a man I offended. And a friend of mine was also going to go as a mediator. And so my friend contacted this other person and said, "Trevor and I would like to come for a visit." And he said, "Well, you can come, but Trevor can't." And he's using the reason that I offended him as his reason for not following Jesus. He was so offended, but he doesn't want to get back to the Lord. And he uses it as an offense. Well, we keep trying. We keep confessing our sin. And He's faithful and just to...

[1 John 1:9 NKJV]

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Conclusion and Prayer

He's taking away those spots. He's taking away those blemishes so that He can present to Himself a glorious church, without spot and without blemish, by the transforming of our lives, because He's making us more and more like the Lord Jesus. May the Lord bless us this

morning, and may He allow us to be co-workers with Him to transform our lives, so that when people look at us they'd say, "They remind me of Jesus."

Father, we just thank You for Your goodness this morning. We thank You for the work of Jesus Christ. Amen.

He takes the horrible, scary, unspeakable horrors of sin, and He was able to deal with it completely and fully:

[Isaiah 53:5 NKJV]

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

He despised the shame, and then He healed us with His stripes, and His life, His death—and He conquered sin and death when He rose again from the dead, giving us new life, a new life in Christ, that we're able to be more and more like Him.

Bless Your word to us, we pray, as we commit this day into Your hands afresh. For the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.