

The Core Doctrines of the Gospel – 2

Who is man?

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Last week Pastor Tim began by telling us about God. God is all knowing. He knows everything. He watches our thoughts like we watch Netflix. God is always present. He is everywhere at the same time. So there is no place hidden from God. He sees everything we do. At the same time, God is perfectly righteous. He is pure, and he cannot mix with impurity. One prophet and preacher of the Old Testament prays to God in this way:

“You are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil.” (Habakkuk 1:13a NLT)

God’s purity makes it impossible for him to accept our impurity. He will not accept evil people into his presence. If I had a delicious brownie chocolate dessert here, and I said that it is 99% chocolate brownie and 1% dog poop, would you eat it? I hope you would not. It is disgusting. It is gross. Your very nature demands that you push it away. In the same way, God is 100% pure and he cannot let 1% evil live in his presence. His very nature declares that. 1% bad disgusts him the way you are disgusted by the dirty brownie. One American preacher from 300 years ago said it this way: We are like spiders in the hands of a man over a fire. One move and he can drop them in the fire. Everything inside the man wants to drop the spiders. That is God looking at sin. Do not be deceived. This side of God is as real as the love side. It is the love that keeps him from opening his hands.

This prayer by the prophet says one more thing. It says that God cannot stand the sight of evil. This does not mean that God is not capable of seeing evil. It means he cannot see it and do nothing about it. This God who is pure is also just. That means he must do what is right. He must punish the guilty. Letting the guilty go is unjust. God cannot do that. So even though God allows the bad things we do now on earth to pass without immediate punishment, one day he must hold court and do justice. Hebrews 9:27 says that *“it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”* The day God will hold court and do justice is called judgment day. The book of Revelation talks about judgment day like this:

“¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.” (Revelation 20:11-12)

Could you imagine it? Everything we have ever done will be punished. The Apostle Paul speaks of that judgment day in this way:

“¹⁶ On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 2:16)

Judgment day is a fundamental part of the gospel. It is repeated again and again. Without judgment day so many things fall apart. All rapists, murders, thieves, liars and abusers of children will pay. They will be held accountable. There is no escaping judgment. Do you have secrets? There will be a day when God judges the secrets of men. This is a challenging thing to think about, but it makes sense of why Jesus had to die for us. The gospel without sin and judgment is not the gospel. God has a purpose for this. Often, the most precious jewels are displayed on a plain black cloth. Not because the fabric is beautiful, but it helps to highlight and focus all of the attention on the gem. In the same way, the jewel of the Gospel is the most beautiful on the backdrop of the darkness of man and his need for a savior.

Last week, we asked the question “Who is God?” This week we ask the question “Who is man?” Let us soften our hearts and open our ears to the word of God on this subject. Our main thought today is that man is going to be judged. So every person will stand before the throne of God, but what exactly will we be judged for? I want to give you five things we should know that we will be judged for, if you do not believe in Jesus:

1. Every person will be judged because we suppress the truth of God.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:18)

According to the Apostle Paul, men are in denial. They see God’s divine power. They see that it took a timeless intelligent being to produce the universe we live in. They can see it, but they close their eyes. They can hear it, but they cover their ears. They know it, but they suppress the knowledge they have. This looks different depending on the time and context. For the ancients, they worshiped statues of animals, fish and men. They worshiped gods that raped women and lied to people. They knew that these immoral/humanlike figures could not possibly represent the eternal, immortal God correctly. But they worshiped them anyway.

In our time it looks like many things, but one of the most blatant and scary examples is modern natural science. Scientists who study the universe are almost positive that the universe came into existence out of nothing. The vast majority says that at one moment, time, space and matter began to exist out of nothing. So nothing somehow became something. They teach it as scientific fact. Yet when a Christian says that the Bible says God created the universe out of nothing, they reply that they do not believe in that. Scientists see the incredible complexity and engineering inside the biological cell along with DNA information inside the cell, but assume that all this must be accidental. Humans have no problem recognizing information from accidents. When we see Mt. Rushmore, and we see a natural mountainside, we can tell the difference between what intelligence can cause and what a natural process can cause. It is so mathematically improbable and so difficult for scientists to imagine that the first self-replicating life form came out of nothing that some scientists are beginning to say that aliens put life on earth.

Whether it is politics or science or law or family or society, men see God everywhere, and they try to cover it up. Richard Lewontin, one leading evolutionary biologist at Harvard, wrote about the blindness of materialistic scientists this way:

“Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the obvious absurdity of some of its theories, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unproven explanations of how things came to be, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to a belief that there is nothing outside of the material universe... For we cannot allow a divine foot in the door.”

This is one of many ways we close our eyes to God.

2. Every person will be judged because we ignore God.

One famous Pastor says it this way:

“What is sin? It is the glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved. That is sin.”

What we struggle to understand is that we were created for God. We are supposed to worship him. We are supposed to glorify him. That means that we see and stand in awe of his amazing person. Every time we ignore him, it is another way we put ourselves at the center of the universe. We dethrone God. Or we exchange him. We chase after 100 different things, and when it comes to him, we are not excited.

On judgment day we will be held accountable for all this.

3. Every person will be judged because of every thought, word and action that did not please God.

Could you imagine if I took your thoughts, attitudes and actions for a week and put them on the screen for all the people here to watch? Would you fear that? Would you be careful if you knew it would go on Facebook? Every emotion, every attitude, and every word you say. Now, imagine God. He is there, always watching and never forgetting, always seeing our thoughts and recording them like a movie. On that day there will be no one who can lie about themselves. God is witness, the jury, the judge and the executioner in the same person. God says every thought, attitude and action will be charged against us.

4. Every person will be judged because of the sins we cause others to commit.

If you study the science of earthen dams, you learn that one consideration is animal burrows. That is that the holes made by one single animal can weaken a dam to the point that it breaks under pressure. This has actually happened on several occasions in the USA. Can you imagine?

We think our sin is ours alone. We think we are islands. We dig into sin and think it is private. It is only affecting me. It is all good until the dam breaks. All of our selfishness spills out and hurts those around us. Not only does it hurt other people, but it pushes them to sin. It tempts them to sin. Sins against people is actually teaching them to do the same. Did you know that children who are abused are the most likely to abuse? This is a fact. Whether great or small, our sins affect others. So imagine that I get mad at my wife and I say very hurtful words to her. Then she goes and says something angry, because she is angry with my oldest child, Matthew. Then he gets mad and says them to my middle son, Nathan. Then Nathan gets mad and says a mean thing to Ellie. She gets mad and kicks the dog, and the dog gets mad and bites the neighbor. In a sense, I caused all that. You see, the Bible says on judgment day we will be guilty not only of our sins, but we will be guilty of all the people we cause to sin. What does Jesus say about this? Are we really going to be judged for causing others to sin?

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:5-6)

You all know what a family tree is. Imagine that it was a sin tree. Imagine that we could see how our sins affect others. We could see how every branch connects to the next and the next. So if you are here, and you think you have sinned, imagine actually how many times your selfishness or anger caused other people pain and led them to sin. Just think of how we all repeat the sins of our parents. We act like what we saw. I do not know about you, but when I see my children and they do something bad like me, I feel guilty, and that is right because I taught them, so we are both guilty.

5. Every person will be judged and punished according to the person we sinned against.

What happens if I walk up and slap a MMA/bodybuilder? I will probably get beat up. What happens if I walk up to a group of policemen and slap one of them on the face? I will get beat up and arrested, and

then I will go to prison for a while. What if I slap one of the Arab Kings? I might get my head chopped off. What if I slap the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-Holy God in the face with my sins? What if my life is a slap like a constant rebellion? What if I am a fake? You see, we know that the greater the person we sin against, the greater the punishment. God is infinitely great, that is why the punishment must be so severe. Hell is real because it is the only punishment that matches the offense. All men will stand before that throne. They will not have an excuse. They will see whom they have slapped. They will hear their own words. They will see their own actions. It will be like two trains crashing. One train is our sin passing before us, and the other is God's righteousness and holiness. There must be a crash. Who is man? Man is God's creation that has rebelled against him in every way, and must be punished on judgment day. That is the bad news.

It reminds me of a story. In Ezekiel 37, the prophet Ezekiel has a vision. He has that God took him and put him in a valley of dry bones. They were dry and dead, and the Lord said to him, "*Ezekiel, can these bones live?*" Ezekiel does not know, and it looks hopeless. Then God says to him to speak God's word to the bones. As Ezekiel does it the bones come back to life. What looked hopeless and impossible for Ezekiel is possible with God.

If you are here, there is hope. There is good news. Hear God's word. Come out from your life of sin and death. Jesus was sent by God. Jesus is God come down to die for our sins. He lived a sinless life and died as the perfect sacrifice of God. So he substitutes for us and pays the penalty we deserve. He voluntarily chooses to lay down his life so we can be saved from the judgment of God. He rose from the dead proving to all to be who he said he was.

I want to spend a whole week talking about Jesus as the solution to our judgment. Let this sermon today be clear to you. Do not walk out of the church today thinking that you can do enough good to pay God back. Believe in Jesus and you will be saved from the Day of Judgment. You cannot be good enough to make it in God's presence. The standard is 100% pure or not. You need a savior who can make you pure, not a payment plan. What I want you to understand is that what God did by sending Jesus was the greatest thing that could have happened to humans. We do not deserve what God has done for us. It is his love. Come back next week as I talk in detail about what God did to save us.

In just a little while we will be celebrating the fact that God saved us by taking the Lord's supper. This is for Christians. It is a sign that because we believe in Jesus that by his body and his blood we will stand before God righteous. We are forgiven and made holy. We are saints because of Jesus. This is the gospel, and there is no more beautiful way to end.

Discussion questions:

1. Habakkuk 1:13 talks about the purity of God. How does the purity and righteousness of God affect his ability to relate to mankind?

2. Hebrews 9:27 talks about dying first and then being judged. Why would God wait to punish us for our sins? Why would he not just punish people the first time they sin?
3. Revelation 20:11-12 talk about judgment day? What things can we learn about that day from these two verses?
4. Romans 2:16 talks about God judging men's secrets. What does that mean?
5. Romans 1:18-20 talk about men suppressing the truth. Can you think of an example where you have seen this?
6. Matthew 18:5-6 talk about one person being guilty of causing another to sin. In what ways do people cause other people to sin?
7. Do you think anyone is good enough to make it to heaven through his or her own goodness? Why?