

Topic

- I INTRODUCTION
 - A Remember: Sin is "missing the mark":
 - 1 Sin is not a thing
 - 2 Sin is part of you! Me!
 - a It refers to how far off the mark we are from God's ideal plan for us
 - b But our error, our failing, does not corrupt us internally
 - (1) We sin but we do not become sin
 - (2) We remain inherently good
 - (3) Our missing the mark does not render us evil
 - (a) If it did, Jesus who is "Truth" could not love us!
 - [1] John 14:6
 - [a] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
 - [2] MATTHEW 9:12
 - [a] On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."
 - (b) His ministry on behalf of "sinners" certifies that, in our sin, we remain good and lovable
 - [1] Our actions at times are imperfect, less than God wants
 - [a] They harm us
 - [b] And/or they harm others
 - [2] They retard our growth or the growth of others
 - (c) But we retain a core of inner worth, of inner goodness
 - B Evil does not originate from within us
 - 1 The Biblical notion of the "devil" attests to evil originating from outside our beings
 - 2 The existences of forces of evil outside us asserts
 - a There is evil in the universe, forces that hurt and retard our growth in love
 - (1) Evil does lure and tempt us: by being good, but not good enough for our needs
 - (2) When we surrender to the temptation, the urge, our sin affects us and others
 - b But the source of evil remains outside of us
 - 3 Therefore, although impaired, we remain good
 - C Once affected, we become increasing off center, off the mark
 - 1 We experience an inner emptiness
 - a An area of guilt and shame
 - b A sense of not being "OK," a sense of becoming even less "OK"
 - 2 This emptiness, unease, causes us to turn ever more desperately to the universe to fill our vacuum
 - a We seek to make ourselves "OK"
 - (1) By acquisition
 - (2) By accomplishment
 - (3) By relationships
 - (4) By our appearance
 - b We only succeed in missing the mark farther
 - (1) None of the people or things or achievements to which we turn can give us the love we need
 - (a) They only distract us temporarily from our "dis-ease"
 - (b) Soon we become even more aware of our emptiness
 - (2) And none of the things to which we turn has the power to mend, heal our past errors and emptiness
 - (3) Matthew 16:26

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- (a) For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?
 - 3 Gradually our failures result in depressed ideals, hopes, dreams
 - a We lower our expectations
 - b We learn to live with our pain
 - D What we need is
 - 1 A sense of forgiveness for our past errors, our being off the mark
 - a Because of our own straying from the ideal
 - b And because the actions of others have misdirected us
 - 2 Grace, love, perfection in the present consists of:
 - a The ability to accept ourselves completely
 - b A sense of complete fulfillment
 - 3 And a sense of acceptance of our present status, an awareness of being made "clean"
 - 4 An assurance that our serenity can endure into the future
 - II THE WRONG ANSWER: OBEYING LAWS
 - A We seek to become "good," "OK," serene
 - 1 I try to become perfect by acting perfect: if only I act perfect, I'll feel perfect
 - 2 We strive to do this by obeying what we feel are God's rules
 - 3 By following "The Law" according to our American understanding of the Law
 - B Americans and Christians face difficulties in striving to live by the Law
 - 1 We transfer completely erroneous ideas to "The Law"
 - 2 We read our culture's grasp of Anglo-Saxon laws back into what "The Law" means in the Bible
 - C Most Christians see morality as dealing with rules, with laws
 - 1 Specifically we see morality as keeping the Ten Commandments
 - 2 We ignore Paul's claim that Jesus has freed us from Law
 - a Galatians 5:18*
 - (1) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
 - b Romans 7:6*
 - (1) But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.
 - D Religious Commandments are unlike American laws
 - 1 The Biblical word "Law" refers to much more than rules or sets of rules
 - a "The Law" is a term that refers to the first five Books of the Bible (called "The Torah")
 - b These books provide an important understanding of and introduction to all Biblical rules
 - (1) They are not guides to help us gain God's approval
 - (2) Precisely the opposite is true when the Torah is examined
 - (a) God, took the initiative and elected, delivered, and saved Israel from Egyptian slavery
- [1] Exodus 6:1
 - [a] Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."
 - [b] 2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.
 - [c] 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens.
 - [d] 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.
 - [e] 6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

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- [f] 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD."
- (b) Next He fed, protected, and guided them
 - [1] Out of Egypt
 - [2] Through the parted waters of the "Red Sea"
 - [3] Across the desert terrain
- (c) Only then did God offer Israel the "Commandments," "the guidelines"
 - [1] Exodus 20:1
 - [a] Then God spoke all these words:
 - [b] 2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 3 you shall have no other gods before me.
 - [c] 4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.
 - [d] 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, 6 but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.
 - [e] 7 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.
 - [f] 8 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work.
 - [g] 10 But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work-- you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.
 - [h] 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.
 - [i] 12 Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
 - [j] 13 You shall not murder.
 - [k] 14 You shall not commit adultery.
 - [l] 15 You shall not steal.
 - [m] 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
 - [n] 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor
 - (d) Therefore the commandments can't be guidelines for obtaining God's love
 - (e) They can only be guidelines for keeping God's love, guidelines for responding to this love
- 2 Biblical "Law" is a record
 - a A record reminding us first of God loving, saving, helping us
 - b And only then a guide showing how God invites us to respond to His love
- 3 Biblical Law embraces all that God speaks to us: in action and message
 - a God's "Word" addressed to us is a better phrase than God's "Law" ordering us
 - b The spotlight is not on God commanding us
 - c But upon God taking the initiative to act on our behalf, God serving us!
 - d His generous actions should invite a response from us
- E American law is different from the rules, the individual laws, that are in the Bible
 - 1 American laws have an objective, external life
 - a They apply to all persons equally: no exceptions
 - b They apply under all circumstances (unless specifically excepted in the law itself)
 - 2 Example: if there is a stop sign at a completely empty intersection
 - a A car is supposed to stop

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- b Ignorance of the sign is no excuse
- c Traffic conditions are no excuse
- F Religious laws are guides to love
 - 1 They apply only when they open us to loving self, God, or others
 - 2 They cease to bind us when love is impeded by them
 - a This statement is not a new, radical, 20th century approach to the commandments
 - b St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the Catholic Church's greatest theologians, taught it in the last half of the 1200's
 - (1) He held that anytime a law became a barrier to love, it instantly ceased to apply
 - (2) Thomas applied this guideline equally
 - (a) To Church rules
 - [1] We are to attempt to attend a weekend Mass
 - [2] But we are expected to miss it
 - [a] In order to care for a sick child
 - [b] In order to help a mother with young children in a car needing a tire change
 - (b) And to God's commandments
 - [1] Remember the guideline Jesus offered us
 - [a] Mark 12:28
 - {1} *One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"*
 - {2} *29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;'*
 - {3} *30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'*
 - {4} *31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*
 - [b] John 13:34*
 - {1} *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*
 - [c] Mark 2:27
 - {1} *Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath."*
 - [d] Jesus tells us that love is the standard that we are to use to interpret all the other rules of God
 - [2] We need ask only one question
 - [a] "Does the law/commandment help us or others to love?"
 - [b] If the answer is "No," the law does not apply to us in this situation
 - [c] Example
 - {1} Parents of a starving child who have tried to work and still have no food have a **duty** to steal
 - {2} A child's right to life supersedes another person's right to property
- G But even when viewed and followed correctly, Biblical Law cannot make us be "OK" on the inside
 - 1 My experience
 - a When acting perfectly and all were applauding me, I felt no relief from my emptiness
 - b I still heard a voice within me, silent, but condemning
 - 2 Being perfect now does not bring me back to the mark I missed before
 - a It simply keeps me from drifting farther from the ideal
 - b My acting perfect at any moment cannot atone or correct for my past inner void
 - (1) At times it can help me remove guilt: my feeling uneasy for what I've done
 - (2) But it cannot erase my sense of shame: my feeling uneasy for who I am
- H St. Paul tries to alert us to the futility of hoping to save ourselves through our actions

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- 1 He warns us that we are not saved by our works
 - a Galatians 2:15
 - (1) *We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;*
 - (2) *16 yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.*
 - (3) *17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor.*
 - (4) *19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
 - (5) *21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.*
 - 2 Our own experiences should support the testimony of St. Paul
 - a Acting perfect does not allow us to be perfect
 - b It only creates more emptiness within us
 - c Slowly and increasingly we become dependent upon our attempts to escape
- III TRUE FORGIVENESS: JESUS CHRIST THE LORD
 - A So what is forgiveness?
 - 1 Better question: "Who is forgiveness?"
 - 2 Forgiveness is not an action we perform
 - 3 Rather, it is a Person, our God, who transforms us by uniting with us
 - B Forgiveness is Jesus uniting with us
 - 1 Our God's Love, Life, Spirit comes to us and joins with us
 - a He comes to us where we are: off the mark
 - b He unites making no criticism, judgement, condemnation
 - c John 8:3
 - (1) *The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, 4 they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery.*
 - (2) *5 Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"*
 - (3) *....10 Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."*
 - 2 He asks only that we accept and claim the ministry of service He offers us
 - 3 Since He created us with a free will, He will not force His ministry upon us
 - C The entire life and ministry of Jesus is both a reality and a sacrament
 - 1 It actually happened: The Lord became Jesus to be our Christ
 - 2 But each moment of the ministry spotlighted in the Gospels is also a sacrament, a symbol
 - 3 The Lord continues to unite with us in order to save us, to be our Christ
 - 4 The actions of the ministry of Jesus interpret how He continues to minister in order to accomplish our salvation
 - D How does Jesus help us to "hit the mark?"
 - 1 He freely forgives our failures of past and present
 - a Mark 2:5
 - (1) *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts.*
 - (2) *7 "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"... 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? ..*

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- (3) 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."
- (4) 12* He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.
- **2 He heals our weaknesses, our distance off the mark**
 - **a Mark 2:10**
 - (1) But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" --he said to the paralytic-- 11 "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." -- [He makes us clean!]
 - (2) 12 And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"
- **3 He feeds the hunger of our hearts, spirits, lives**
 - **a Mark 6:35**
 - (1) When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; 36 send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat."
 - (2) 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat."
 - (3) 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. 42 And all ate and were filled;
 - (4) 43 and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.
 - b Our hunger to be loved
 - c Our hunger to be OK
- **4 He cleanses our social leprosy and isolation**
 - **a Mark 1:40**
 - (1) A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!"
 - b "Touch" in the Greek is actually "embrace"
 - c He allows us to be part of life
 - d He allows us to offer ourselves as God's gifts to others, to society
- **5 He resurrects us from our spiritual death**
 - **a Mark 5:35**
 - (1) While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe.".....
 - (2) 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement,
 - b He calls us from inner darkness to light
 - (1) From emptiness to fullness
 - (2) From failure to success
- **6 He commissions us with a purpose in life**
 - **a John 20:21**
 - (1) Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."
 - **b Mark 3:13**
 - (1) He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him.
 - (2) 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons.
 - c He saves us from a feeling of futility to a discovery of our mission, our purpose in life
- **7 He preaches the Good News that our God is with us**

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- a Mark 1:36
 - (1) *And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."*
 - (2) *38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.*
- b Mark 1:14
 - a *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*
- c **He comes to where we are, off the mark**
- d He instantly transforms our stables into His Living Temples
- 8 **He celebrates a friendship with us**
- a Mark 2:15
 - (1) *And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him.*
 - (2) *16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*
- b With sinners, who are 'off the mark'
- c With crooks, who have broken life's rules
- d With prostitutes, who have sold their self- respect for the trifles of life
- e With Samaritans who are viewed as religious heretics
- 9 **He dies for us!**
- a John 19:28
 - (1) *After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.*
 - (2) *30 When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*
- b He offers the fullness of His life to us as we are
- c His Spirit instantly changes us from sinners to saints
- 10 **He resurrects with us**
- a Mark 16:9
 - (1) *Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping.*
 - (2) *11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. 12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. 13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.*
 - (3) *14 Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.*
 - (4) *15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.*
- b **He assures us that our denials, betrayals, abandonments, do not kill His love within us**
- c He lives ever again in our hearts
- d And because He lives, we can face today!
- 11 **He ascends with us**
- a Luke 24:50
 - (1) *Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.*
 - (2) *52 And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; 53 and they were continually in the temple blessing God.*
- b **He unites with us**
- c **Therefore, where He is, we are!**

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- (1) But He is with the Father
- (2) And so are we – whether we realize it or not
- E In short, Jesus redeems but He does not save us
 - 1 [I'm using my own private definitions of "redemption" and "salvation"]
 - a Please do not understand my definitions as the best meanings of the Biblical terms
 - b But they do help me to interpret the Biblical reality]
 - 2 I have an example that illustrates the distinction between the terms
 - a **You're \$187,000 in debt**
 - (1) The debt comes due Monday 5:00 PM
 - (2) You don't have the means to retire the debt
 - (3) If not paid, you'll forfeit all you own
 - b **I learn of your problem and unknown to anyone, I'm a multi, multi millionaire**
 - c **I deposit \$1,000,000 in a bank account in your name**
 - (1) There are no strings attached to my gift
 - (2) **I set up a secret Swiss account**
 - (3) I did it to save you from paying taxes on the gift
 - (4) The money is exclusively yours:
 - d **Scenarios:**
 - (1) **One:**
 - (a) After making the bank deposit I'm killed in a hit and run accident
 - (b) **You never learn of the gift**
 - (c) **Are you rich or poor?**
 - [1] It's impossible to respond to the question with a single answer
 - [2] Objectively, you're rich, a millionaire
 - [3] Subjectively, you're poor, facing complete bankruptcy
 - (d) **You have been redeemed from your debt**
 - (e) **But you are not saved from your debt**
 - (2) **Two**
 - (a) **I call and tell you about the deposit I've made**
 - (b) **But you don't believe the gift is real**
 - [1] You make no effort to claim the account as yours
 - [2] Instead you strive desperately to earn enough to pay off an impossible debt
 - (c) **Same question**
 - (d) **Same answer**
 - 3 Here is an application of these examples to the reality of life
 - a **From the cross, Jesus has redeemed each of us, all of us**
 - (1) Jesus gave us the fullness of His Spirit
 - (a) **John 19:28**
 - [1] *Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.*
 - [2] **30* When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**
 - (b) **To whom did Jesus "give up" His Spirit?**
 - [1] **Not to the Father – He receives the Spirit from Him**
 - [2] **Rather to us**
 - [a] **Who do not have the Spirit, who lack inner love**

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- [b] Who need the Spirit
- (2) A parable of Jesus shows the reality of this application
 - (a) Matthew 13:44*
 - [1] *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*
 - [2] 45* "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls. 46 "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
 - (b) Recently, I realized
 - [1] The man/merchant is Jesus
 - [2] The treasure/pearl is you, is me
 - [3] Jesus literally sold all to buy you for Himself
 - [4] This gift is the worth that He sees in you
 - [a] 1 Corinthians 6:20*
 - {1} For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.
 - [b] 1 Corinthians 7:23*
 - {1} You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.
- (3) Jesus offers each of us all of His goodness
 - (a) And Easter assures us that our failures cannot inhibit His gift
 - (b) As a result, our missing the mark is blotted out
 - [1] We go from being human failures to becoming Godly successes
 - [2] Jesus is immersed in us
- b The scenarios: we have all been redeemed from our sins
 - (1) But many never hear of Jesus
 - (a) Some never hear anything about Jesus
 - [1] Sometimes they experience love as a gift from others
 - [a] They know partial peace
 - [b] Are they saved?
 - {1} Partially
 - {2} At best, they must fear the love they know must end with death
 - {a} This reality as they view it limits any peace they know
 - {b} The reality of death erodes full salvation
 - {c} They are on and off the mark
 - (b) Some never know true love
 - [1] They are redeemed
 - [2] And they are unsaved
 - [3] They live off the mark until they die
 - (2) Some hear of Jesus, but not of a loving Jesus
 - (a) His gift is not seen as a gift
 - (b) It is seen as a reward for them to earn
 - (c) They are cautioned about Jesus
 - [1] He is a lawgiver
 - [2] He is a judge
 - [3] He is a punisher
 - (d) The message of the cross is only seen as theoretical for them
 - (e) So they live unsaved

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- [1] **They keep all the rules in a desperate attempt to win a redemption that is already theirs**
 - [2] **But they can never achieve what they already have**
 - [a] **They are redeemed**
 - [b] **But they are not saved**
- (3) **Some learn of the gift of Jesus**
 - (a) **But they focus upon the horror of their sin, the enormity of their debt**
 - (b) **They can't experience the gift as theirs**
 - [1] **They focus on the self as a sinner**
 - [2] **They do not focus on Jesus as their Savior**
 - (c) **They believe they are redeemed**
 - (d) **But they do not believe they are saved**
 - (e) **They do not claim and live the gift that is theirs**
- (4) **Some hear of the gift and claim it – and, even, share it!**
 - (a) **They know they are redeemed**
 - (b) **And they celebrate their salvation**
 - (c) **But they must do this moment by moment**
 - [1] **They are constantly getting and remembering from their lives differing messages**
 - [2] **They must reclaim their sanctity again and again**
 - [3] **The use of holy water while entering Church allows us an opportunity to engage the whole person in doing this**
- F **"Grace" means "gift"**
 - 1 **It is a biblical and religious term used to describe our status**
 - a **Jesus freely offers Himself to us**
 - b **He redeems us**
 - 2 **Our challenge is**
 - a **To claim it**
 - b **To live it**
 - c **To share it**
 - (1) **The gift commissions us to announce it to others**
 - (2) **We must minister to others in order to keep alive our experience of the gift**
 - (a) **Not just by speaking to them**
 - (b) **But by accepting in those "off the mark" the inner goodness Jesus found and claimed in us**
 - (c) **By preparing the way for others to experience Jesus**
- G **Salvation, forgiveness, is definitely a community experience**
 - 1 **It can't last if we try to live it just as "Jesus and me"**
 - a **We were created to live in community**
 - b **Genesis 2:18**
 - (1) **Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner."**
 - 2 **It must be "Jesus and us"**
 - a **The way for Jesus must constantly be prepared by others**
 - b **The whole Gospel of Matthew stresses our need for community to know Jesus**
 - (1) **Matthew 18:20***
 - (a) **"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."**
 - (2) **Matthew 28:20***
 - (a) **"and lo, I am with you [Plural "you" in the Greek] always, even to the end of the age." Amen.**

Topic

- 3 Ultimately, we must be both “catholic” and “one”
- 4 Because we are “holy” and “apostolic”
- H Jesus hits the mark on our behalf
 - 1 Our past is forgiven
 - 2 Our present is perfected — and more!
 - 3 We become more than we as creatures could ever be
 - a As His community, we more than hit the mark
 - b It's as if we become the whole target and more
 - c We are one with all creation
 - (1) We are no longer ashamed of ourselves
 - (a) We are not ashamed of our nakedness
 - (b) We are enabled to use our failures to help, heal, others
 - (2) We are no longer afraid of God
 - (a) There is no need to hide from Him
 - (b) He comes to us
 - (c) All we need to do is claim our union with Him
 - (3) We no longer need dispute with others
 - (a) We no longer need blame them for our Original Sins
 - (b) We no longer need to compete against them for scarce resources
 - [1] We can cooperate with them in finding infinite Love
 - [2] Love is experienced and deepened through community, not weakened
 - (c) We no longer need fear what others can do to harm us
 - [1] We can claim our Easter victory
 - [2] We can realize they can never touch our spirits
 - (d) We no longer need to receive from others
 - [1] That attitude makes me dependent upon others
 - [2] And it renders me passive
 - (e) I can realize that I am God's gift to others
 - [1] This realization allows me to be free, free from dependence on others
 - [2] It also allows me to be active with a sacred vocation and mission
 - (4) We can realize that we are one with the universe
 - (a) We begin to realize our sacredness
 - (b) We see the universe
 - [1] Not as a substitute for God
 - [2] But as an additional gift from God
 - [3] It cries out
 - [a] Romans 8:18
 - {1} *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.*
 - {2} 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God:
 - {3} 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
 - {4} 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.
 - [b] All creation wants to be used to help others
- (c) We realize that we are stewards called to advance the universe to perfection

Topic

- [1] Creation is not to be hoarded, not to be kept for ourselves
 - [a] We don't need more than we have
 - [b] We realize we are now at the center of the mark
 - [2] Creation is not to be used to harm others
- I All this simply means, Jesus
 - 1 Is Love
 - 2 Is Grace
 - 3 Is Redemption
 - 4 And offers Salvation
- IV THE RESULT OF FORGIVENESS: FREEDOM
 - A Paul stresses that grace sets us free
 - 1 We are free from all law
 - 2 This freedom is not a minor point in our spiritual lives
 - a Paul explodes in anger against the Galatians who would seek to be yoked, bound anew, to the Law in any fashion
 - b **He wants those who teach a different Gospel to be cursed!**
 - c Or he wishes that they would be castrated! – which would make them unclean, isolated
 - (1) Galatians 5:12*
 - (a) I could wish that those who trouble you would even castrate themselves!
 - B Jesus invites us to be yoked to Him
 - 1 **The Jews saw themselves as yoked to the Law**
 - a It was a source of pride
 - b But it was also a source of striving – futile striving according to Jesus
 - 2 **Jesus called those weary from attempting to keep the Law**
 - a There is no (Sabbath) rest from obedience
 - b There is just an inner exhaustion
 - c Matthew 11:28*
 - (1) "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30*
"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
 - 3 **He calls us to yoke ourselves to Him**
 - a He invites us to discover our peace, our rest, in the gift of His ministry to us
 - b 30* "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
 - c [We need to ask ourselves: "Is it?" --
 - (1) Is our religion "easy?"
 - (2) If not, we must have perverted the message of Jesus
 - 4 **He assures us that our "souls" (our lives) will find rest**
 - a He is gentle and lowly of heart
 - b He is not demanding as the Law is demanding
 - c He is serving and healing
 - C We must grasp the nature of freedom, however
 - 1 **It is not license to act as we choose**
 - a We've received the gift of law
 - b We are called to be loved and to love
 - 2 Our freedom ultimately is a "freedom to be"
 - a To be, to become at each moment, all we were created to be
 - b **To allow the whole person we are to be loved**

Topic

- (1) Physically
- (2) Emotionally
- (3) Intellectually
- (4) Sexually
- (5) Socially
- (6) Spiritually
- **c To claim all of ourselves, all that we are**
 - (1) Love wants the best for us
 - (2) We must also want the best for ourselves when we are filled with the experience of being loved by God
 - (a) Loved freely – “grace”
 - (b) Loved completely – with all God’s love: the meaning of the cross
 - (c) Loved successfully – Easter assures the victory of this love
- **d To strive to develop all of ourselves**
 - (1) **To accept our bodies: diet, exercise, rest, play**
 - (2) **To accept all our emotions:**
 - (a) We must not bury them
 - (b) And we must not let them control our actions
 - (3) **To accept our minds**
 - (a) To develop them
 - (b) To read, listen, observe
 - (c) And to learn to weigh and judge
 - (4) **To accept our sexuality**
 - (a) **To claim both our masculinity and femininity**
 - [1] Our masculine side: there is goodness in us to bless the lives of others
 - [2] Our feminine side: there is warmth in us to encourage others to bring themselves fully to live
 - [a] To a richer life
 - [b] To claim their right to exist
 - (b) **To appreciate the sacredness of our sexuality**
 - [1] It is not “dirty” or “unclean” or “evil”
 - [2] It was created by God as a means of communicating the most intimate love
 - [3] And it is pronounced “good” by God!
 - (5) **To accept our social nature**
 - (a) **To realize that society needs us**
 - (b) Society needs us whether it wants us or not
 - (c) **We must love, serve, others gently**
 - [1] We should not be like tidal waves deluging them
 - [2] Love responds to others where they are
 - [3] Our love should call them to realize the sacredness of their social worth
 - (6) **To accept our spiritual dignity**
 - (a) **We must see in our spiritual mission our ultimate vocation, our ultimate dignity**
 - (b) **We are called to be**
 - [1] **The image of Father**
 - [2] **The apostle of Jesus Christ**
 - [3] **The Living Temple of the Holy Spirit**
- **D If our freedom to be is claimed and lived**

Topic

- 1 The "Law" will be obeyed
- 2 We will be able to free ourselves from slavery
 - a From slavery to lust
 - (1) We won't treat others as objects offering us pleasure
 - (2) We won't threaten the security of families to satisfy our own desires
 - b From slavery to greed
 - (1) We will not need to hoard
 - (2) We will not need to compete rather than cooperate with others
 - (3) We will learn to find joy in sharing
 - c From slavery to jealousy ("envy")
 - (1) We will not crave the property of others
 - (2) Rather we will celebrate their possessions
- 3 If we kill, abort, maim
 - a We lose the freedom to be
 - b We lose the the freedom to be loved as persons
 - c We lose the the freedom to serve and help others as persons
- 4 If we lust, rape, adulterate, we lose these same freedoms
- 5 If we rob, steal, harm the property of others, we lose these same freedoms
- E Love, grace, Jesus slowly frees us to be all we were created to be
 - 1 We are sacred mysteries, unique children of God
 - (1) We are more than creatures
 - (2) Indeed, we are God's adopted children
 - (a) Ephesians 1:5*
 - *[1] having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*
 - 2 We are apostles of Christ to a wounded world and Church
 - 3 We are free to be
 - a We are free from Law and servants of love
 - b We are not slaves; rather we are adopted children who respect their Father's "menu," "diet," for them
 - (1) Romans 8:14*
 - (a) *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15* For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."*
 - (b) *16* The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*
- V CONCLUSION
 - A We are sin, or, sin exists within us: we are off the mark
 - B Jesus is Forgiveness
 - 1 He is grace
 - 2 He is a grace that makes us more than "on the mark"
 - C Jesus is grace, love, gift
 - 1 A gift that sets us free
 - a Free to be
 - b Eager to serve
 - 2 John 8:32*
 - a *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*
 - 3 John 14:6*
 - a *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*