

# Not Because of Your Righteousness

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Before the preaching of God's Word, please take your Bibles again and turn to the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy chapter 4. It's the fifth book of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy chapter 4, and I'll read verses 1 through 14. This is the Word of God. Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you.

Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.

You saw with your own eyes what the Lord did at Baal Peor. The Lord your God destroyed from among you every one who followed the Baal of Peor, but all of you who held fast to the Lord your God are still alive today.

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering, to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

[ 1 : 2 6 ] What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? What other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

Only be careful and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, Assemble the people before me to hear my words, so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.

You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire.

You heard the sound of words but saw no form. There was only a voice. He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow, and then wrote them on two stone tablets.

[ 2 : 3 3 ] And the Lord directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. Amen. We look forward to hearing the word of God preached.

I've never been a landlord. But I've heard that being a landlord is hard, especially when you have challenging tenants. Tenants that make a mess of the place.

Tenants that don't pay their rent on time. Tenants that don't leave when their lease expires. Their squatters. Living there rent-free, unwelcome on the property.

We can have sinful thoughts as Christians that can take up residence in our hearts and in our minds. Like squatters who are living rent-free.

But instead of resisting those sinful thoughts, we can grow complacent. We can let these thoughts live comfortably in us.

[ 3 : 44 ] Perhaps we even give those thoughts something of a room with a view. Our passage this morning is going to serve up some much-needed eviction notices to these sinful thoughts.

Our passage is going to show them the door. Because we need to identify these sinful thoughts. And we need the word of God to address them with the truth that it gives us.

Now we just heard a reading from Deuteronomy chapter 4. Turn with me in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 9. Lord willing, for the next three weeks we're going to do a short sermon series in a large book of the Bible.

The book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy means second law. And here's why. When God saved his people out of Egypt.

When he brought them out of Egypt, he gave them his law on Mount Sinai. And he prepared them to then enter into this land of promise that he had spoken first to their forefather Abraham of hundreds of years before.

[ 4 : 57 ] It was a land that was flowing with milk and honey. It was going to be a wonderful inheritance for the people of Israel. But then when he brought them to this land, that generation failed to trust God.

That generation failed to obey what God had said in his word. And the consequence for their disobedience, the consequence for their sin, was that that generation would all die in the wilderness.

And so they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness until that generation had died off. Now the book of Deuteronomy introduces us to a new generation of Israelites.

The generation that now would inherit this promised land. And so God, in Deuteronomy, is giving them his law again.

So it's not a second law. It's not a new law. It's not a different law. But it is a second rehearsing of the law that God had given on Mount Sinai back in the book of Exodus.

[ 6 : 04 ] God's repeating himself because this new generation needed to hear his word afresh. They needed to learn from the first generation.

And they needed to hear what the first generation had ignored. We need to hear God's word as well this morning from Deuteronomy 9. This is not just a book for Israel then.

This is a book for us now. We need all of Scripture for all of life. We need the Old Testament. We need the New Testament. We need it all to live the Christian life.

And so we need Deuteronomy. And the New Testament actually shows us this. The New Testament sets us something of an example. Well, Deuteronomy is one of the most quoted Old Testament books in the New Testament.

Only Psalms and Isaiah quoted more by the New Testament authors. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he would answer every one of Satan's temptations with the Scriptures.

[ 7 : 11 ] And what book of the Bible was on his lips but Deuteronomy every single time? Deuteronomy was what he said to Satan. There is much that this book also has to say to us.

So let's follow the example of those New Testament writers. Let's follow the example of our Lord. And let's see how we need Deuteronomy. Now in three weeks, if you're doing the math, we are not covering the whole book.

That would be a lot to take in in three weeks. We're just doing a small portion of it. Starting here in chapter 9 this morning. And in this passage, we are going to identify and address three sinful thoughts that can take up residence in our hearts.

So let's consider the first sinful thought together. I don't need to listen to God. I don't need to listen to God.

Read with me beginning in verse 1 of Deuteronomy chapter 9. Hear, O Israel, you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, who can stand before the sons of Anak.

[ 8 : 34 ] Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the Lord your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you.

So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly as the Lord has promised you. There are all kinds of studies out there that say people are bad listeners.

You're probably aware of this. You've probably heard something to the effect of this, that we only take in very little of what we hear. We only retain perhaps about 50% of what is said to us, which as a preacher is a bit discouraging at times.

Thank the Lord for his grace. And there's all kinds of reasons why for this. But one of those reasons, perhaps the most prevalent reason, is that we are ready to talk ourselves.

We aren't listening because we're already thinking about what we are going to say at the door to the preacher. Just kidding. But we're already thinking in conversation.

[ 9 : 43 ] We're already thinking about what we want to exit out of our mouths, even while somebody else is talking to us. Maybe we want to respond to them. Maybe we have this thought that we just think is so wonderful, we can't wait to say it.

Maybe, even worse, we've already moved on from that conversation. Perhaps you even know the look on somebody's face when they're checked out. And you're like, they're not listening. And they're going to say something completely different at this time.

And that's what happens. Changing the subject entirely. I'm bored with this person and what they're saying. I have mentally moved on. Just waiting for that half-second pause in American culture to interject what I have to say and to interrupt the conversation.

And so the study that I had found, it concluded this. We are more concerned with being heard than with hearing. We are more concerned with getting our thoughts out there than taking in the thoughts of another.

We're selfish. We're arrogant. The study didn't use those words, but we know what the Scriptures say about the human nature. We think we are something.

[ 10 : 59 ] We make much of ourselves. I have something to say. I like to be heard. And I don't need to hear from others.

I don't need the input of someone else. I don't need the input of even God. There's a good reason that God begins Deuteronomy 9 with just three short words.

Hear, O Israel. And He doesn't just do it here in chapter 9. This is a common refrain in the book of Deuteronomy. In all of the first five books of the Bible.

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. The Lord is one. Listen closely.

Pay attention to what the Lord has to say. And this generation, especially in Deuteronomy, they need to listen to the Lord. Because the last generation hadn't.

[ 12 : 03 ] The last generation came to the cusp of the promised land. And they saw the people in the promised land. And God had told them, I'm going to give this to you. I am going before you. And they saw those people in the promised land, these giants.

And they said, we are like grasshoppers compared to them. We can't take the promised land. We're going to get destroyed by the people in the land.

And so they said, we're not going to do what God has said. And they concluded that they would disobey. So this generation needs to learn from the first.

God repeats himself. And he reminds this new generation that he's going to go in before them. And they will inherit the land. Yes, these nations are greater and mightier than you.

Yes, these cities are great. And they are fortified up to heaven. Yes, the people there are great and tall. They have a reputation. You've heard it said, who can stand before the sons of Anak?

[ 13 : 08 ] But the new generation of Israel, don't forget, God goes before you. He is a consuming fire. He will dispossess these wicked nations.

They will be judged for their sin. And now you, Israel, will inherit this land. Some may say, who can stand before the sons of Anak? Mark. Psalm 76 says, who can stand before you, the Lord, once your anger is roused?

So these Israelites, they needed to hear from the Lord. They needed to know what he had to say because the previous generation had not listened to him. And this generation was not immune from those same sinful tendencies.

Ignoring God's word. Forgetting God's word. Going their own way. But that sinful thought, I don't need to listen to God, can take up residence in our hearts as well.

The people of Israel had seen God's great acts of deliverance. They had seen him split the Red Sea. They had seen him bring the Red Sea crashing down. They had seen him save them from their enemies.

[ 14 : 18 ] He'd sustained them in the wilderness, gave them food to eat, gave them water to drink. He had made it so that the sandals of their feet did not wear out. They had seen his provision.

If anybody would obey, if anybody would submit, it was them. And so how much more do we need to hear the voice of God in his word today?

Hear, O church, the Lord is speaking to you. Now we are always letting someone talk to us. It's just a matter of who.

If we don't listen to the truth of God, if we don't listen as God speaks to us in his word, here is what happens. We will speak lies in our own hearts.

If we don't give our ear to God, we will listen to our own hearts and how they can lead us astray. Look at verse 4. Verse 4 begins, Do not say in your heart.

[ 15 : 28 ] That's the temptation. God, I don't need to listen to you. I'm already speaking to my own heart. I don't need to hear what you have to say.

I've got it covered. I've got it figured out. We're good here. I've got control of my life. I know how to best live my life. I don't need to listen so closely to what you have to say.

I'm already speaking. And God, you and I, we can't talk at the same time. Now we may not overtly think in those ways. You may not be stubborn and rejecting God and his word.

Maybe you are this morning. Maybe you are outside of Christ and doing that. Turn to Christ today. Listen to what he says. But even as Christians, this sinful thought can take up residence in our hearts.

We may not realize it, but we may be living in these ways, keeping our Bibles shut, silencing God's word so we can hear ourselves speak.

[ 16 : 34 ] So who's talking more in your life? Who has the microphone of your life? Are you quieting your heart to listen to God? Or are you shutting up his word and listening to your heart?

Some of the worst advice out there today is the advice to listen to yourself. Stop saying in your heart. Stop listening to your heart and hear what God has to say.

So the first sinful thought of this passage, I don't need to listen to God. This passage says, yes, you do. Hear, O church, and do not say in your heart.

Let's consider the second sinful thought that needs to be evicted from our minds. I deserve good from God. I deserve good from God.

And we see that in verses 4 and 5. Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, it is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land.

[ 17 : 46 ] Whereas, it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God is driving them out from before you.

And, that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. God chose Israel.

From all of the nations upon the earth, God chose this one. He chose Israel. He set his love upon Israel.

Israel was special to God. Listen to how God describes his relationship to his people. It's from Deuteronomy 7, just a couple chapters earlier, verse 6.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

[ 18 : 54 ] So, Israel was set apart. That's what it means to be holy. It means to set apart for a particular purpose. And here, they were set apart for the purpose of being in a unique relationship to God.

God. Only Israel was called his people. Only Israel was called his treasured possession. They were unique.

They were special to God. Kids, have you ever been picked for something? Kids, have you ever been picked to be maybe the line leader at school?

Or maybe you were picked to pass out papers in class. Maybe even in Sunday school this morning, you got picked for a special job. Maybe mom picked you to help with dinner.

It feels good to get picked to do something, doesn't it? There's something in that that makes us feel special. So, Israel very well felt special.

[ 20 : 00 ] Israel had been picked by God, but they were tempted to come to some wrong conclusions. Israel was tempted to say in their heart something that was not true.

So, here's what it comes down to. They were creating this false cause and effect relationship. Israel was creating this false cause and effect relationship.

They were thinking because of something in us, because of something about us, God has now set his love upon us.

They were saying God sees something in us. God sees something that draws him to us. God sees something that makes him to say, I want them.

I want them to be my treasured possession because there is something to be treasured in who they are, in what they've done. His choosing of them, his blessing of them, they were thinking it's somehow conditioned on something about us.

[ 21 : 07 ] So, Israel was taking the spotlight and they were just shining it right upon themselves. Just shining it right on themselves. We are special to God because X, Y, Z.

We earned this status. So, God is taking that sinful thought and he's giving it the eviction notice. Not at all. Get that thought out of your head.

Put it to death. Not because of your righteousness. Not because of the uprightness of your heart, verse 5 says.

Israel, you earned nothing. Israel, you merited nothing. So, God takes that spotlight that had been shining on Israel and God shines it somewhere else.

First, he shines it on the wicked nations. He shines it on them. And he says, I'm giving you this land because of the wickedness of others.

[ 22 : 08 ] This judgment of God here on the nations of Canaan was a fulfillment of his word from Genesis 15. God had told Israel's forefather Abraham hundreds of years ago.

He had told him hundreds of years ago, I'm going to give your descendants, who now we see here in Deuteronomy 9, I'm going to give your descendants this land. But we need to wait.

We need to wait until, Genesis 15 says, their iniquities are complete. Meaning, God was going to wait until the people in Canaan had sinned to their full measure that he would allow.

God would wait until his patience had run out on these people and until then, he would not give the land. That time has come. That time has come.

The iniquity of the Amorites is complete and so do you see what God is saying here to Israel? This isn't about your righteousness, Israel. That's not what this is about.

[ 23 : 17 ] This is about their sins reaching their full measure. So the Israelites had put the emphasis in the wrong place. Look at us, they said. But God was saying, no, look at the nations.

It's not because of you, it's because of them. Then God takes that spotlight and he shines it another place. God takes that spotlight and he now shines it upon himself.

And he says, it's because of my faithfulness that I'm giving you this land. At the end of verse 5, we read, that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

So God is saying, I'm giving you this land because of my faithfulness, because I am faithful to my word, not because your hearts are righteous. Get that sinful thought out of your head.

Israel, you didn't earn this land. Israel, you didn't deserve this land. You didn't merit the land, but I give it to you as the nations are judged. I give it to you as I am faithful to my covenant promises.

[ 24 : 28 ] I give it to you because I chose you and I set my love upon you. If you are in Christ, if you are in Christ this morning, you earned your standing before God no more than the Israelites did.

You are special to him. You are. You are a treasured possession to the Lord, but not because of anything that you have done, not because of anything in you.

He did not choose you. He didn't pick you because you chose him, because you picked him, because you decided that you were pretty wise for doing that, not because of anything in ourselves.

No goodness did we have, no wisdom did we possess. We were foolish rebels against God. But this sinful thought can still take up residence in our hearts.

I deserve good from God. I've earned something from him. I am worthy of his approval. I am worthy of his praise.

[ 25 : 41 ] praise. And that way of thinking means this. God is indebted to me. God owes me something.

Israel got the land. What is it that I get for my righteousness? Give me what I have earned. And here in Deuteronomy 9, God says, not because of your righteousness.

Romans 3 says, no one is righteous. No, not one. We brought nothing to the table of our salvation. We had no righteousness whatsoever.

We had no upright heart, only a heart dead in sins. Whatever righteousness that we thought that we had, in reality, God says in Isaiah 64, those were dirty rags.

We were completely incapable of any spiritual life. It was not while we were buddies with God. It was while we were enemies that we were reconciled to Him.

[ 26 : 47 ] While we were enemies, not while we were righteous, or not while we were a better person than someone else, while we were enemies, while we lived in willful rebellion against Him.

He chose us. He set His love upon us and He showed His love to us in sending His Son. The truth of the matter is that God did not save us because of our righteousness.

God saved us in spite of our unrighteousness. We needed a righteousness that was not our own. We needed a righteousness that we did not have, a righteousness that would be imputed to us, that would be given to us, that would be credited to us because we had no righteousness that we brought to the table.

And that righteousness is found in Christ alone. 1 Peter 3.18 says, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.

We were unrighteous. we were deserving of death. Jesus Christ is the righteous one and yet He died in our place that we might be clothed with His righteousness.

[ 28 : 13 ] Not because of your righteousness but because of the righteousness of Christ. Does God look upon you with favor? Does God give good to you?

Because He does. Just as He gave good to Israel, He gives good to His people because of the righteousness of Christ. Nothing in us, all of Him.

Let's look at the third and the final sinful thought that this text evicts from our hearts and minds. Sin is really no big deal. Sin is really no big deal.

And we are going to read the rest of this chapter. There are many verses here, so let's listen in close to what God has to say. Verse 6. Know therefore that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness for you are a stubborn people.

Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place you have been rebellious against the Lord.

[ 29 : 27 ] Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath and the Lord was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone the tablets of the covenant that the Lord made with you I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

I neither ate bread nor drank water and the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God and on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.

And at the end of forty days and forty nights the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone the tablets of the covenant. Then the Lord said to me arise go down quickly from here for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made themselves a metal image. Furthermore the Lord said to me I have seen this people and behold it is a stubborn people.

Let me alone that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they. So I turned and came down from the mountain and the mountain was burning with fire and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands and I looked and behold you had sinned against the Lord your God.

[ 30 : 45 ] You had made yourself a golden calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the Lord had commanded you. So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes.

Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water because of all the sin that you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger.

For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the Lord bore against you so that he was ready to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me that time also. And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him.

And I prayed for Aaron also at that same time. Then I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust.

And I threw the dust of it into the brook that ran down from the mountain. At Taborah also, and at Massah, and at Kibrit Hathava, you provoked the Lord to wrath.

[ 31 : 51 ] And when the Lord sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, go and take up possession of the land that I have given you, then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and did not believe him or obey his voice.

You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights because the Lord had said he would destroy you.

And I prayed to the Lord, O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people or their wickedness or their sin. Lest the land from which you brought us up say, because the Lord was not able to bring them into this land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness, for they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.

Israel needed a history lesson, a very lengthy history lesson that we too just heard. They needed to be reminded of their past.

[ 33 : 12 ] They needed to be reminded of their past as they prepared to enter that promised land. Israel, you think you're worthy to receive this?

You think you're righteous? Let's look at the record and let's see what it says. And so here we have this long, this extended and detailed recounting of Israel's history.

And in all of these verses, there's one point that keeps coming out. And we've seen that this point is true of us. Now we see it's true of Israel. It's not because of Israel's righteousness that they're inheriting that land.

It's in spite of their unrighteousness. Israel actually looked a whole lot like the wicked nations that they were going in to take possession of their land.

Israel was a stubborn, idolatrous people. They had offended their perfectly righteous God. And not just once, not just twice, but time and time again.

[ 34 : 16 ] Here we see all of their sin on display. It is a lengthy record. Moses is speaking here. Moses does not sugarcoat the sin of the people.



All through their wilderness wanderings, Moses says in verse 7, you have rebelled against the Lord. Then Moses starts at the beginning at Mount Horeb, which is another name for Mount Sinai.

the place where God had given his ten commandments and all of his laws to the people. While Moses was up on the mountain receiving those ten commandments that were written by the very finger of God, what were the people doing?

Fashioning an idol, fashioning this golden calf, and as verse 16 says, they had turned aside quickly from the way that the Lord had commanded them.

But Mount Horeb wasn't the only incident that Moses brought to mind. He then lists many times that Israel had rebelled against God beginning in verse 22, at Taborah also, and at Massah, and at Kibrith Hathavah.

[ 35 : 20 ] What happened in those places? The Israelites had complained against God because they were hungry. They had been complained against God because they were thirsty. And then when God did provide for them, he provided quail for them, they ate far more than they needed.

They were greedy for food. They were gluttonous. Where this happened, Kibrith Hathavah literally means graves of desire or graves of lust.

And finally, the last place that Moses brings to mind, Kadesh Barnea. Here, Israel had rebelled against the Lord when he commanded them in the previous generation to take the land.

And here, they had heard the reports from the spies, and in response to those reports, they had feared the people in the land. And this is what they concluded. Would that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would that we had died in this wilderness?

Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?

[ 36 : 32 ] Egypt? And they said to one another, let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt. And they were ready to stone Moses and Aaron. The Israelites refused to believe God then.

They refused to trust that he would indeed give them the land. They considered the better option was to go back to slavery in Egypt.

That's a pretty lousy better alternative choice. And they thought that's better than what this is. All of this sinful, stubborn rebellion from Israel. Moses laid it out for the people.

So how did God respond to that sin of their past? How did God treat them as a result of that? What did God do about it? Because how he responds to their sin tells us a whole lot about how God feels about the sin itself.

If their sin is no big deal to him, then his response is going to be rather muted. He's not going to make a big deal out of it. So did he laugh it off?

[ 37 : 40 ] Did he say, I get it, I understand, people make mistakes, nobody's perfect? Did he just shrug it off and move on? No.

He was provoked to wrath, verse 7 says. He was so angry with them that he was ready to destroy them, verse 8 says. He was ready to blot out their names under heaven, verse 14 says.

The Lord bore hot displeasure against them, verse 19 says. And when they made that golden calf, Moses says in verse 21 that he burned it with fire and crushed it, and he crushed it very small, grinding it until it was fine as dust.

And then he says here in Deuteronomy 9 that he threw it back into the brook. He did all of that back in Exodus 32. But he also did this.

He made the people then to drink the water of that brook with all of that ground-up idol that he had just put in it. And then he gathered those men who had remained faithful to God, who had not participated in the idolatry, and he brought about severe consequences of death to those who had participated.

[ 39 : 00 ] And then the next day, God sent a plague on the people as well. Are we seeing the picture here that Moses presents to us in Deuteronomy 9?

Let not your heart say, sin's no big deal. If not for the intercession of Moses, according to the sovereign plan of God, the nation of Israel would have been destroyed.

How do you treat sin? How do you think that God looks at your sin? It won't matter. God won't notice. God won't mind.

As a Christian, perhaps the thought creeps into her mind, I'm forgiven, I'm in Christ, so it's okay. If you are in Christ, you are forgiven.

And those who are forgiven, by the grace of God, never think sin is just okay. It's never to be taken lightly.

[ 40 : 02 ] The Christian is never to have a casual relationship towards sin. Instead, Titus 2.13 says that we who are Christians are zealous for good works.

Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession.

Deuteronomy 7. A people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Those who are bought with the blood of Christ, those who are God's possession, are zealous for good works.

You can't be zealous for good works while also having a casual relationship towards sin. You can't be zealous for good works while shrugging off the works of the flesh.

Sin is offensive to God. Sin grieves God and we who are in Christ must see sin in that way. Are you taking your sin as seriously as God does?

[ 41 : 13 ] And if so, how? It's one thing to agree with God. It's one thing to say, yes, you are right. Sin is a big deal. Even in Christ, I should not make light of my sin.

But do you desire for God to change you? Do you desire for him to create in you a clean heart like David desired in Psalm 51? What do you do when you commit sin?

Because what you do says a whole lot. about how you see it. It says a whole lot about what you really want. We've been in 1 John in the evenings.

1 John 1 9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Is confession of sin a regular part of your prayer life?

Do you name your sins before the Lord? Do you confess them in particular ways to him? Is confession of sin a regular part of your relationship to other Christians in your life?

[ 42 : 22 ] Are you quick to ask forgiveness when you sin against others? And then are you fleeing from sin, getting as far away from it as possible?

You have better things to do. You have good works to be zealous for. Do you need to take more drastic steps to address sin in your life?

Jesus said, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

That is taking sin as seriously as humanly possible. Jesus says, if you must, there are links we need to go to. Now for most, we can and we should take measures before reaching that point.

Are you? Are we complacent? Are we lazy? Are we letting sinful thoughts take up residence in our hearts and saying, my sin isn't that big of a deal?

[ 43 : 28 ] And again, maybe we're not saying it, but does the way that we live actually reveal that's what we believe. Now if you're struggling with that thought, if you're struggling with the thought that my sin isn't a big deal, you're justifying your sin, you're minimizing your sin, you're making excuses for your sin, then look to the cross.

Look to the cross. Because if we downplay our sin, if we think of sin as just mistakes, or if we think of sin just as poor judgments or poor choices, if sin is anything less than offending a holy God, we have to come to terms with this question.

Why did Jesus have to die? That seems like a really extreme response to sin, if sin is no big deal.

sin? Why did Jesus have to spill his blood? Why did he have to lay down his life for me? That is a steep price to pay for someone's slip up, for someone's mistake.

Look at the price that was paid for your sins. Look at the cost, the blood that was shed that you might be forgiven. If we think that our sin is no big deal, we forget that our Savior suffered and died in our place.

[ 45 : 07 ] God the Father did not withhold his own son, but gave him up for us. The Father gave up his son that we might be forgiven.

That was the cost of our salvation. Our sin was so great. The price was so steep that only the death of our Lord could pay for our sin.

If you think that your sin is no big deal, then you're saying the price that our Savior paid was too high. That wasn't necessary. Boy, I think we could have had an alternative route to that.

That was extreme. And God's word says, no, there was no other way. There was no other avenue because the cost of our redemption was too steep a price for anyone else, for any other sacrifice.

Only my son would do. Sin is not a big deal. Sin is a big deal to God. Let's not make light of it. So this week, let's be on guard.

[ 46 : 24 ] Let's be watching for these sinful thoughts trying to take up residence in our hearts and minds. And let's remember that we need to listen to God.

Let's remember that we need to see that we in ourselves deserve no good from God, but receive it because of Christ. And let's cling to the truth that our sin is a big deal.

And let's look to Christ as we do that. Don't speak in your heart, but hear, oh church, the truth of God's word to you.

May he be glorified in our lives. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, what a price indeed was paid that we might be reconciled to you.

what a price was paid for sinners. Not for good people who needed a little cleanup, but for sinners bent on rebelling against you.

[ 47 : 32 ] What a salvation. What a joy that you would make us to be yours. We were so undeserving of your grace, we were deserving of your wrath, and yet you poured out your mercy and grace upon us in Christ.

Father, saying thank you seems to fall short. But we thank you indeed.

We give you praise that we are found in Christ, that you've made us your own. And so we pray, Father, by the help of your spirit this week, that you would take away these sinful thoughts that creep into our hearts, that you would replace them with the truth of your word, and that we would then live accordingly, that we would live according to them, that we would not simply know what is true and know what is best, but that you would give us the strength to live it, that we would be the people of your possession who are zealous for good works.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen.