

God Gives Light

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[0 : 00] Hit me baby one more time. Got some props here, hang on, just give me a tip.

Yeah, Renee normally does that for me, is that right? If you're new, if you're visiting, my name's Jono, I'm the pastor of this congregation. It's really good to have you here tonight.

If you are new, let me just bring you up to speed with where we're at in our sermon series. Need to know that here at the church we basically go through books of the Bible, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, as we go through our sermon series.

And right now we're in the book of Ephesians. And we're in, I think, week seven out of nine. So nearly coming to the end of Ephesians. And what we've seen so far is that Paul, who wrote the book, really paints a big picture view of what Jesus has done for us as the church.

And then he explains what our response should be as the church. So we've seen, particularly in the first three chapters, Paul explains what Jesus did on the cross and what it achieved, really in the cosmic scope of things.

[1 : 12] So he talks about eternity past, where God chose a people for himself to save before we were ever born or anything was created. And then he talks about what that means for us in the present.

And then he shoots forward into the eternity future and paints a picture of Christians being delivered into heaven to receive an eternal inheritance that can never fade away.

And all of this is accomplished by Jesus' death on the cross. And then we've seen in the last couple of weeks that Paul takes a picture of what the church should be. The people who have been redeemed, who have been saved, who Jesus died for.

These people are meant to be an incredible gathering of people. In chapter two, he particularly talks about what it means to be a Christian in the church.

And his language is just amazing. Let me read it to you. We'll go to chapter two, verse four. I'll read a little bit. He says, But God, who is rich in mercy out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

[2 : 28] By grace you have been saved and raised us up. That is, raised the people of the church up, raised the Christians up and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So that in some respect, if you're a Christian, you are not only sitting in the room here right now, but you are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, in the heavenly places. So that in the ages to come, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, listen to this, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which he prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

That's his picture of the church. It's a little different to the pervasive picture of the church that we find today. And I've got to be honest with you, when I was thinking about this, it's a lot different to the picture that I see today.

It's different to the picture that I see in front of me right now, and when I look in the mirror. I'm not doubting for a second that Christians have been raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly places.

[3 : 45] That is 100% true. That Christ died for us, quite apart from our own good works, saving us by grace, that he destined us for an eternal life in heaven.

I don't doubt any of that. I don't doubt that he's created good works for us to walk in. But the reality today, when we look around at the church, it doesn't match up with Paul's words in Ephesians.

It just doesn't. So we've got a problem. I look around and I see a church made up of a lot of people who go around living their life in sin, taking advantage of grace.

You know, I'm going to be forgiven, so I'll just do this and this and this. I don't need to repent because God's already forgiven me. We live a life in sin that is out of step with Paul's picture of the church in Ephesians.

We don't do the good works that God has prepared in advance for us, or at least we don't even think about what those good works might be. We're so focused on ourselves. When we come to the book of Ephesians, you'll see quite plainly, and I'm sure you've seen already, that the big problem is sin.

[4 : 59] And the one solution we have is Jesus. That's the big idea. The problem is sin, and the solution is Jesus. That's what we're going to see tonight. The problem is sin because everyone in this room, though they've been saved by the blood of Jesus, though they've been forgiven by grace through faith, though they've been promised heavenly rewards and riches and inheritance in heaven, every one of us sins.

And quite often we sin habitually. That is, we do the same sin over and over again and put up hardly any fight against it. So we've got a problem.

And in this passage, Paul is going to point out some particular sins that we're going to look at in a minute. But tonight, I want you to think to yourself, what is the biggest sin in your life right now that needs to be dealt with?

What is the habitual sin that you keep struggling with and perhaps gave up struggling against a long time ago? What's the sin that stands between you and God or between you and your fellow Christians?

We're going to address how to overcome that sin. But Paul looks in this passage, particularly at a few sins that are so up to date and perfectly applicable for us today.

[6 : 24] First of all, he talks about sexual sin. This is a big issue for us today. This is a big issue for them back in Ephesus in the first century. Sexual sin has always and always will be a big issue.

And he talks about it in chapter 4, verse 19 in particular. He writes, of those who indulge in sin, he says, they have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Licentiousness is particularly here talking about sexual impurity and it's literally taking license to do whatever you like with whoever you like.

This is the great right that we claim for ourselves in our society today, isn't it? Like you can deprive people all kinds of human rights, right down to drinking water, but you cannot deprive anyone of their right to sexual license.

If you want to get in a fight, go to someone and say, you're doing this sexually and you can't do it. You need to stop doing that. You'll get a fist in the face or a lawsuit or something so quickly because this is our key right that we want to hang on to today, our sexual license.

[7 : 43] I can have sex with whom I want, how I want, as often as I want, in whatever context of a relationship I want, whether they're male, female, it doesn't matter. Sexual license is a right to us today and Paul says this was true of them as well.

Verse 19, they've lost all sensitivity, have abandoned themselves. Perfect way to say it. Just let themselves go. The sexual revolution is here and it was there. Abandon themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

He also talks about it in verse 3 of chapter 5. He says, but fornication, that is sex outside of marriage. You just, I mean, I don't have to help you think up situations that people can get into sexually outside of marriage.

All of that is fornication. All right? But fornication and impurity of any kind or greed must not even be mentioned among you as is proper among the saints.

For us, so often in my discussions with Christians and particularly when I was doing youth ministry, the key question that people wanted to ask, you've got a boyfriend, you've got a girlfriend, you're in this relationship, the key question that youth pastors get asked, Chris will nod with me on this, is how far can I go?

[9 : 07] Right? Okay, we can't have sex, we can't have sexual intercourse, but that's for marriage. But how far can I go in the meantime? What can we get away with between now and then?

That's the key question that younger people ask and perhaps adults think without asking. What can I get away with?

How close can I go? Paul says, fornication, sex outside of marriage, and impurity of any kind, he knows that you'll just think up something that he doesn't mention, so he gives a catch-all term, impurity of any kind must not even be mentioned among you.

The question isn't, how far can I go? Paul says, it shouldn't even be mentioned. Sexual intimacy outside of a marriage relationship shouldn't even be mentioned, let alone experimented with, for God's people.

I've heard youth pastors and other pastors give kind of a graded, you know, little step, staircase to marriage, and you know, if you've been going out three months then you can do this, and you've been going out a year, and then one guy said to me, if you've got the cards booked for the wedding, then just go for it.

[10 : 27] Right? It's not good advice. Paul says, it shouldn't even be mentioned. He also says that we should treat our fellow Christian sisters as though they were our sisters, our fellow Christian brothers as though they were our brothers.

I don't know about you, but I've never thought about how far I can go with my sister. It's disgusting, right? That's how we should think about fellow brothers and sisters in the church.

Purity. Absolute purity outside of marriage. Once you're married, freedom. Endless freedom. Almost endless. Freedom. Alright, so that's sexual sin.

This is a massive problem for us today, and I'm not just talking about outside of the church. We know that outside of the church sexual impropriety is just skyrocketing, but inside the church I know that this goes on.

I know this is a struggle for all of us. Then you start talking about pornography, and it opens a whole new world of opportunities for us to sin. It should not be that way.

[11 : 32] Not for God's people. What about greed? He talks about greed as well. It's so easy to talk about sexual sin, isn't it? It just rolls off the tongue. We can just hammer it.

But as soon as he starts talking about greed, it gets a whole lot harder for us. Let's see what he says. Verse 19 as well. Sorry, skip ahead. Verse 3 and 5 of chapter 5.

He says, Fornication, impurity of any kind, or greed. You wish he deleted that, didn't you? Or greed. Must not be even mentioned among you, as it is proper among the saints, entirely out of places, obscene, silly, vulgar talk, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

Be sure of this. No fornicator or impure person, or the one who is greedy, that is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ of God.

Greed. You might have been safe from the sexual sin question. Everyone's indicted by the greed. The greed one.

[12 : 34] We live in the West. We're so rich. So much opportunity for us to indulge in greed. Just to test this out today, I walked up to Shopping Town.

I would not ever go to Shopping Town voluntarily, and particularly on a Sunday. Have you been there? It's like a... It's like going to the Coliseum.

It's just... To get out of there alive is... My shirt was ripped in half, and I had blood on my... Right? So I went there just to observe this. This greed.

And people just walk around with massive bag loads of stuff. And every shop front just wooing you to go in there and buy something you don't need.

Paul puts greed on the same level as fornication, sexual sin. I don't know if you've read the book. I forget who it's by, but it's called Affluenza. It talks about this proclivity we have in the West to spend and spend and spend and try and fill up our emptiness with new stuff and new toys and new clothes.

[13 : 55] I mean, we spend more on cosmetics in this country than anywhere near the amount that we spend on overseas aid. We should be indicted by this passage.

In what way is greed taking a hold of your life and leading you into more and more sin? In what way are you trusting in your possessions rather than in God?

That's why Paul says anyone who is greedy, that is an idolater. He knows that if you're greedy, if you're lusting after more and more stuff, then eventually that stuff is going to become your God.

It's going to replace the one true God and God will not stand for idolatry. He also talks about obscenity. So, he's talked about sex, he's talked about greed and he talks about obscenity.

So, this is in chapter 4, verse 29. He says, Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up as there is need so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

[15 : 00] He also says in verse 4 and 5 again, Entirely out of place among the church, among us as Christians, is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk, but instead, let there be thanksgiving.

For me, this is the big one for me. This is my sin. For the preponderance of my life, this has been my sin. My tongue is a weapon of mass destruction.

I'm taking that from James. In the book of James, I think it's chapter 3, he says that the tongue is like a fire. It's like a spark that sets off a wildfire and is itself set on fire by hell.

He says it's like a rudder on a ship. It's a small part of our body, but it steers our whole life. And my whole life, I've struggled with this sin of obscene speech, of cutting people down, of using words, trying to get people to fight, or whatever it is, you know, just making fun.

And this has been a real battle for me. It's another one of our sins that we sweep under the rug. It's the acceptable sin of cutting people down, particularly in Australia with our tall poppy syndrome.

[16 : 20] Paul says, don't let your tongue be a weapon of mass destruction. Let it be useful for building people up. He says, let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up.

Imagine if that was the case. Imagine if the only thing you heard when you came to church was speech that built you up. You'd leave here just on fire for Jesus. We'd be unstoppable if all we did was talk to each other and build each other up.

But obscenity, coarse joking, just bad jokes, sexual innuendo, you know, fill the blanks. All it does is serve to lead us away from Christ into darkness, away from being the people who He has called us to be.

Sexual sin, greed, obscenity. He talks about drunkenness. This is over the page. Verse 18 of chapter 5. He says, do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

Again, this is a huge problem for us in Australia. You know, you watch Current Affair and you'll hear about this great problem that we have with binge drinking. I looked at some statistics today.

[17 : 39] I think 51% of all alcohol that's consumed is consumed in such a way that it can cause short-term harm to someone or long-term harm. So 51% of all the alcohol that's consumed is consumed in such a way that the person gets violently drunk.

Is all alcohol sin? No. Is alcohol a gift of God for us to be used wisely? Yes. Is drunkenness a sin? Absolutely. Absolutely. Again, this has been a big problem for me.

Just a little confessional here tonight. Before I became a Christian, I was a big drinker. Big, big drinker. And it was sort of what I was famous for and I really delighted in that.

And I became a Christian and I just, I took God at His word and I really tried to live as Jesus would have me live, but I did everything I could to get around this verse. I came up with things like, I remember talking to my pastor and saying, you know, if I get a little bit drunk, I'm way better at evangelism.

Just more personable. Idiot. He told me this verse, do not get drunk. Couldn't be any more plain guys.

[18 : 59] I'm not naive either. Talk about out in the world how there's this big problem with drinking. I was talking to Matt Sheffer the other day about this and, you know, the standard response to this problem that we have with binge drinking is, you know, we need more education.

That will cut down the culture. It's all a lie. What people need to do, as Matt pointed out, is get saved by Jesus. Stop living a life of sin.

The problem with that is that Christians keep doing this. It's Christians who are getting drunk. Some of you are probably sitting here tonight with a headache because last night you were on a bender.

I'm not kidding. I know that this happens. Do not get drunk on wine or anything else for that is debauchery.

The translation I had at the time when I was trying to argue myself out of this was do not get drunk on wine for it leads to debauchery. And I thought, well, as long as you get drunk and you don't end up, you know, impregnating someone then that would be okay as well.

[20 : 10] But no, this is a better translation. Do not get drunk on wine for that is debauchery. It's debauchery. It's sin. It's sin, guys. Don't get drunk.

Don't go out on the town and get drunk. You know how much it takes to get drunk.

Don't do it. Stop. Exercise some self-control. It's a fruit of the spirit that we should have as Christians. Don't get drunk. So there's some manifestations of sin that Paul talks about.

You can name your own. Maybe it's just lack of self-control in a number of other areas of your life. He goes on to talk about some of the reasons that we struggle with these things.

Some of the reasons that though we want to be godly, we keep falling into sin. Alright? So he talks about hypocrisy or having a foot in each camp when it comes to our former life as sinners and our new life in Christ.

[21 : 27] So this is a chunk of text verse 22 to 25. Read it with me. He says, back up.

Here we go. 22 to 25. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to clothe yourselves with the new self created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours for we are members of one another. So he uses a really common metaphor here to try and communicate one of the reasons that we fall into sin and it's getting dressed and getting undressed.

So he says, when you became a Christian you took off the old clothes of sin, the old way of life and when you became a Christian you put on the new clothes, the new way of life, the way of Christ.

So I've got some clothes here tonight just to show you. way of illustration. Right, we get up, we put on clothes to project an image of ourselves to line up with our identity of who we are going to be that day.

[22 : 48] So I've got my suit jacket here, I wear this in the morning to church to give people the illusion that I'm an organised and mature person. Alright, so I've got an Essendon footy jumper here.

This Now this shows my identity as an Essendon supporter.

Whether you love them or hate them this shows you that I work for Essendon. That's my identity when I'm wearing that. This is my old high-vis shirt from when I used to work blue-collar jobs.

I used to love working labouring jobs. This is one of the high-visibility shirts that you've got to wear these days. My identity as a workman. And this I'm going to have framed my clergy shirt.

If you came in the morning before Andrew showed up I would have been wearing one of those and he's since come and released me from that. So we put on clothes to line up with our identity of who we are.

[23 : 57] Paul says if you have put on the clothes of Christ which show people that your identity is in Christ you can't then go and put on the clothes of your old self. The clothes of the sinful person the person who is in the dark without grace and forgiveness.

It would be like if I turned up to church and I was wearing this little combo here. That makes no sense. It's hypocritical.

You've put off the old self. You've put on the new self. And so much of our struggle with sin comes down to the fact that we claim Christ as our own and we go and live the way that we used to live or the way that the world lives.

We go and find ourselves in those situations where we're led to sin and we're just confusing the clothes that we ought to be wearing. I'm not saying you can't live in the world. Jesus says to his father praying for his disciples I pray that you don't take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

He also talks about a big problem in the church being anger between brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a really important one. Verse 26 to 26 chapter 4 he says be angry but do not sin.

[25 : 17] That is there is a kind of anger a kind of righteous anger against rape against injustice against you name it that is good but do not sin in your anger.

Be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not make room for the devil. And then in verse 31 to 32 he says put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander together with all malice and be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.

I think we lose this sense of how important it is for us as brothers and sisters to love one another. That you don't come and just sit down and face the front and have no interaction with one another and then leave.

We are members of one body. We are a community of believers. We are interwoven together and so anger and bitterness against one another destroys that sense of community and can lead us into sin.

That's why he says when you're angry with one another you leave open room for the devil. How do you let the devil into your life? Harbour anger against another Christian.

[26 : 30] Renee, my wife, is really good on this one. She takes this very literally. She will not let us go to sleep at night if we are angry at one another. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

It's a great practical rule to live by. If you're married, your spouse or just if you're living at home with family don't let the sun go down. That is, don't go to bed at night.

Don't go to sleep if you're angry with them. Make peace. Renee knows that the best way for us to just invite Satan in to come and lie in bed with us is to lie there with anger and bitterness towards one another.

Anger, bitterness, when it festers, can lead us to more and more sin. We associate our brothers and sisters with God and so now we're angry with God and we go and sin boldly because that's what Paul says.

Lastly, actually two more reasons why we find ourselves in these situations. Unrepentance. This is verse 28 of chapter 4. He says, thieves must give up stealing, rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands so as to have something to share with the needy.

[27 : 47] Briefly, what he's saying is if you used to be a thief, it's not enough to get convicted and become a Christian and stop thieving, no, you've got to go and do the work of repentance that is turning away from that sin and then making restitution by earning an honest living and being able to give it to those who are needy.

They're the steps that we need to go. When you realise tonight the Holy Spirit pushes in on you and you realise that sin that you've been doing, these are the steps. That's conviction of sin.

Then you move to forgiveness of sin, confession of sin. Say to God, I'm sorry, I know I ought not to have been doing this or I ought to have been doing that good thing that I haven't been doing.

I need you to forgive me. Then you move into repentance. You turn away from that way of living. This will not be a habitual sin in your life. You will have victory over this in your life.

You turn away from it and then you make restitution where possible. I had a friend, his brother was a thief. They used to steal a bunch of stuff from local schools and when he became a Christian he repented and then he went around and paid all the money that he stole back to the people that he stole it from.

[28 : 56] It's a great picture of Christian repentance and if we don't repent sin harbors and festers in our life just like it does with anger and it leads us to sin. It makes it impossible for us to live the lives that we ought to live as Christians.

Finally he says one of the reasons why we bump around and keep going over this ground of sin that we can't seem to overcome is that we live in darkness.

We're walking around in darkness. This is verse 18 of chapter 4 he says they are darkened in their understanding alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart and then in verse 8 of chapter 5 he says for once you were darkness but now in the Lord you are light.

Live as children of light for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. If you're walking around in the darkness that is in sin.

If you are constantly finding yourself sinning habitually against God it's like being in the dark and the only way out of the dark is to follow Jesus and the only sure way of knowing how to follow Jesus is to read his word.

[30 : 17] Hey Stephen can you turn the lights off for a second? Try reading your Bible.

Get those house lights. You get the idea right? Yeah I saying you get the idea.

If we're living in darkness which is what Paul equates with living in sin it's going to be impossible for us to follow Jesus. There's three results I want to talk about before we finish.

Results that come from this habitual sinning in our lives without repentance, harboring anger, indulging in sexual sin, greed, obscenity, drunkenness, these kinds of sins that we struggle with.

There's three results. Number one verse 30 of chapter 4 we grieve God. It says do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God of which you are marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

[31 : 30] You believers, you Christians, you've been marked with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God lives in you. God is inside of you and he's the seal of your inheritance as believers.

But when we sin habitually, unrepentantly, we grieve him, we grieve God, he cries, we wound him.

And so you turn around to the Savior who died on the cross for you and you turn around to the Spirit who dwells within you and you tell him you want nothing to do with him and it grieves him.

Number one. Number two, you forfeit your place in the kingdom of God. This is so serious. Look at me as I read this.

This is so important. Verse 5, chapter 5. Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person or anyone who is greedy, that is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

[32 : 54] People like this do not go to heaven. People who do these things do not go to heaven. You say, what is it?

justification by works? No, no, no. Paul's already said, chapter 2, verse 10, chapter 2, verse 8 to 10, you've been saved by grace.

It's not your own doing so that no one can boast. What he's saying is, people who aren't saved by Jesus don't go to heaven and people who habitually sin unrepentantly and don't struggle against it, prove that they're not saved.

You want to prove to me that you're not saved, that you're not a Christian? Then go on sinning blindly through life without repentance, without regard to how Christ has called you to live and you'll go to hell forever.

You grieve God. you forfeit your place in the kingdom of heaven. And the obvious outworking of that is verse 6. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient.

[34 : 16] You grieve God, you forfeit heaven, and so you suffer his just wrath and anger forever. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5.

Some of you need to tonight stop the way that you're living. Some of you need to stop going out to clubs and pubs because you find yourself either sinning with drunkenness or singing sexually.

Some of you need to cut up some credit cards because you've been greedy. Some of you just need to mind your tongue and shut up.

It's better to do these things even if they are going to cost us in this life than to suffer God's wrath for the rest of time.

Remember what Jesus said? Matthew chapter 5. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

[35 : 21] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go to hell. If your credit card causes you to sin, cut it in half.

It's better for you to lose your credit card than for your whole entire eternal existence to be in hell under God's wrath and judgment forever. If your internet connection causes you to sin, sever it.

People got along fine without the internet for a long period of time before we had it. It's better to lose the internet connection than to spend your entire eternal existence under the wrath of God in hell.

Jesus said it, Paul said it, and I'm saying it right now. So we've got a big problem, don't we?

Problem is sin. What's the solution? It's Jesus. It's always Jesus. I want to give you three keys to overcoming sin.

[36 : 31] First of all, Paul says, put away your former way of life. We'll read this again. Verse 22 of chapter 4. You are taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts.

You've got to put away sin. And that sounds kind of nice, doesn't it? Like putting something away in a drawer. That's not enough. We can't just ignore sin.

We can't just try and put it aside. We need to kill sin. Elsewhere, Paul will say, put sin to death. Let me tell you a story. When I was growing up in Diamond Creek, my dad has a big property out there, 15 or so acres.

It's bordered by the creek. And as far as I know, per capita, I guess, it has the highest concentration of tiger snakes in Australia and therefore the world.

And tiger snakes are the second most deadly snake in the world. And where other snakes like brown snakes and even taipans will kind of get out of your way, tiger snakes just sit there and wait, just hoping that you'll come past so they can kill you.

[37 : 38] All right? I'm pretty sure that the serpent in Genesis 3 was a tiger snake. And so we grew up around these things and I'm fascinated by reptiles.

I once had a job just catching snakes. I love them. But at one point, a couple of years ago, I think, I was working at my dad's house.

So again, doing these kind of manual labour jobs that I love to do and he was paying me because they were doing a bit of development on his property and we were taking apart just a bunch of sheds, chook sheds and that kind of thing.

So just doing the demolition and breaking it up and taking it away. And as I was walking past the cottage, he's got a cottage on his land, 100 years old, that a family was living in.

I was walking past this cottage and I saw a tiger snake on the front doorstep and a baby's basket next to it. With a baby in it.

[38 : 37] And the people who lived here were really eccentric, like full on hippies. And I went to the door and the back door and I took the basket, but I went to the back door and I said, listen, you've got a tiger snake on your front doorstep.

I'm going to kill it. And they said, no, well, we know it's there, but we like to live and let live. We like to live and let live.

The second deadliest snake in the world next to our baby. And it's ridiculous, but so many of us treat sin that way in our life. I know I've got the sin, I know that it's a constant habitual sin that may lead me to hell, but I'm going to live and let live.

I'm just going to put it aside, try and ignore it and hope that I don't find myself confronting it. A week later, I was pulling a big sheet of tin out from a shed that we demolished and the snake was there and I hacked it to a million pieces and paraded it around.

I've got it on my phone. I've got to kill sin. It's far more deadly than a tiger snake. And the snake of Genesis 3, the devil himself, will use every opportunity if you just put away sin, put it aside, to make you indulge in it, to make you suffer eternally for it.

[40 : 10] Kill it. Kill sin. Second way he gives us to overcome sin is to renew our minds.

You'll see this right throughout the New Testament. Paul talks about it in Romans chapter 12 I think. And he talks about it here. Verse 23 he says, Be renewed in the spirit of your minds and clothe yourselves with the new self created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Right through Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the New Testament, the ponderance of the Bible, you see that the way that you think about something influences the way you act.

It's cause and effect. It's the way the creation has been created. Cause and effect. You think some way about something and then your actions will follow. And so Paul says here and as I said in Romans 12, you got to renew your mind if you want to change your sinful behavior.

The way to renew your mind is first and foremost to read God's word in the Bible. Be soaked in scripture. be soaked in scripture.

[41 : 25] That will change the way you think about sin and therefore the way that you act. Philippians chapter 2 talks about having the same mind as Christ Jesus. Jesus never sinned.

Thirdly, finally, he says we ought to imitate God. Verse 1, chapter 5. He says, therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and live in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Imitation of God is a key for us in overcoming sin. When I was a teenager, I had this guy, I think I was about 18 or 19, I had this little 14 year old who used to follow me around church and just imitate me.

And it started with the clothes that I wore that he would buy literal replications of them from the same stores and wear them. And then it was the stupidly gelled up hairstyle and then it was my sayings and it was just my copy and I hated it.

Hated it. But I went to my dad and I talked to him about it and I said, I just want to punch this guy. And he said to me, listen, we only imitate the things that we love.

[42 : 49] It's true, isn't it? We imitate that which we respect, that we love. And so out of our love for God should flow an imitation of him, a day by day imitation of him.

And the key to this, of course, is reading God's word as well. That's how we find out what the mind of God is like. Before I finish, I want to just knock a nail on the head because you might be sitting here thinking, okay, so the way to overcome sin and not go to hell and live, walk in the good works that God has prepared in advance for me to do, the way to be a Christian is to be a good person.

And there you would be only slightly right because good people every day go to hell. The answer is not morality.

The answer is Jesus. The answer is the gospel. The answer is that we've been saved by grace. And after we're saved by grace, we're called to live like Christ.

If you live like Christ, you'll be a good person. You'll be a moral person. But don't aim to that end only. Don't aim just to earn your scout badges.

[44 : 07] Aim to live like Christ, love like Christ, believe like Christ. Christ. I'm going to pray for us because we've had a lot put before us tonight.

So let's bow our heads. Father, thank you so much for the reality check that you've given us tonight.

That we are called to be a glorious community of people who love you, who walk in good works, who love one another, who do nothing else but build one another up, who shun sexual immorality, who shun greed, who shun drunkenness.

Thank you for this picture that you've given to us and now I pray that we would be able to live so like Jesus that we would be the church that you want us to be.

Father, it's not my words that are going to achieve this but it's your spirit, the Holy Spirit of God that lives within those of us who are believers. Oh Lord, please save the spirit from being grieved by us but rather help us to be reminded of the inheritance that we have as believers and live accordingly.

[45 : 42] Father, as a pastor, my heart just breaks to these people. I want them so much to live like Christ and not stumble through the darkness in habitual sin.

I pray for them and I pray for myself. that we would live lives worthy of our calling as Christians saved by grace. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.