

# **“What Do We Do with Sin?”**

## **By General Pastor Peter F. Paine**

### **Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

I am glad to be here with you today. I don't know what I'm going to do. Malcolm said, “We don't either,” but I do know that my heart is full and I'm very, very thankful for the privilege to be here with you today, and Rod Williams. I look out, and I see José here today. José was recently in Norfolk, Virginia—José Galvez, and probably all of you know José, and many of you have known José for many years. But, you may not know that when José was in Kirgizstan about two and half years ago, he met someone, and she has been building a relationship with Jesus Christ, and with a lot of the ladies in the church, and with myself, and others in the church. I didn't know if this was going to be a friendship, or a relationship, but, about a year and a half ago, she said she wanted to be baptized in Jesus' name. And so she was baptized in Jesus' name—not a year and a half ago; it took a long time. We tried to get to Kirgizstan, and that didn't happen, and she tried to get to the United States, and that didn't happen, but, finally, a little over a month ago, she was able to get baptized in Jesus' name, and, as they were talking, they started to make plans to get married. Now, I thought, “That might happen in a year. That might happen in two years. It might,” but what did happen was, she was talking with immigration, and she was talking to José, and José was talking to Nazira—I think José was talking to the Lord, too—they ended up getting married, So José and Nazira are here today as husband and wife. I'm going to be as plain as I know how to be: I came here today, partially because I knew that would be shock to some of you, and I understand that. You say, “Well, what does that have to do with me?” Well, normally, when I preach a message, I preach a message where it has a story, and a Scripture, and a story, and a point, and a point, and a story, and a Scripture. I think today, I think today I'll just tell some stories, and see if there's some time left for some Scriptures.

Cedric C., how you doing, man? I saw Barb B., I thought I was in California; I see Cedric, I think I'm in Florida. Anyone else want to surprise me here? Jay H., before I go any further, many of you know Jay, and some of you haven't met Jay yet, but Jay's been a faithful brother in our ministry for many, many years. Jay's one of four boys, and Jay's mom and dad are still living, and, unfortunately, just a handful of days ago—I don't remember exactly what day it happened—but, Jay's oldest brother, Scott, who had just celebrated his sixtieth birthday, went to sleep—I believe it was Thursday night, but I'm not positive about that—and he didn't wake up. So, Jay is traveling here with Pat T., right now. Jay is going to go on to be with his family in Iowa, so please keep Jay and his family in your prayers. Scott wasn't sick; there was no indication of this coming or happening. Scott hadn't been feeling sick in any way that Jay knows of... It was a very big shock; sixty years old.

I remember when sixty was old. Young people, stick around long enough, and you'll say that, too. I remember when my dad was sixty, and we had a boat. I was still in high school. He and my mom started late; my dad was sixty when I was in high school, and my dad tried to waterski. I thought, “Why are you doing that, dad? You're sixty! I'm not even sure if we should let you in the boat!” But he waterskied, and did pretty good. Now I'm passed sixty, and I think, “How did he do it?”

So, I said I was going to tell you some stories. Here's one: There was this mom that went to prison, and she was there to visit a man who had murdered her son. The inmate was surprised when he came into the visiting room and saw the mother—he recognized her from the trial. When he sat down at the table, she said, “I came here today to forgive you.” He said, “Thank you.” She said, “No, don't thank me. It's not for you. I'm doing it for me, because, you see, my heart has been getting very, very hard, and I realize that the only way for me to soften it is to forgive you.

I was also thinking about a story I heard several years ago. It's a story of a pastor and his wife, and they had a wonderful church, church family. It was a small church, a loving church; everyone knew

each other very well. The son of this pastor and his wife grew up in the church, and he was a great young man. He did everything right. He never disappointed his parents; he never embarrassed them; he never did anything that would cause the pastor to hang his head and say, "Yeah, my son did that." None of that. He grew up, he was fine; he didn't everything great. He graduated high school. He had a Christian testimony, both in church, and in school, and in the community. So, he went off for two years, in the service, and had come home on leave several times and visited with his church family, and his natural family, maintained his testimony while he was in the military, and, after he had completed his two years of active duty time, and started his reserve time, he decided to move back home, and he was active in the church again. But, while he was in the service, there was a young lady who came to church. She gave her heart and life to Jesus Christ. She was baptized; she was really serving the Lord, and the church family had embraced her. Everything was fine. But, this young lady that got baptized, she had a past; she was a prostitute. Everyone in town knew it. I mean, those that didn't know her, had heard of her. When she got saved, it was sort of a stir in the community, as well as in the church. But they were the type of people to embrace her, and they did a good job as a church family, and they did what church families do; they embraced her. But, you see, this pastor's son took up with her, and they started dating, and one thing led to another, and now they're engaged. And there was a split about to take place in the church, because some people were really finding this unacceptable, because the son had been studying in ministry, and there was a possibility that he was going to be the pastor of that church. Everybody liked him; he assisted his father. It was a potential—it was possible that he would become the pastor, and then what? They would have to deal with this reality. The pastor prayed for wisdom; he said, "How am I going to deal with this? This is my church family, and I love them, and they're hurting, and they don't know why. Lord, grant me wisdom." He prayed, and the answer came, and he knew what to do, how to direct them. He said, "I'm not going to answer people individually; I'm going to do it from the pulpit." And he said, "I understand that a lot of you are troubled, and I prayed for wisdom, and now I think I understand why you're troubled. It's because you don't believe that the blood of Jesus Christ can really cover sin, and I'm going to tell you today, it can."

And I've got another story I want to tell you. This one's a little more recent. Rod and I had a cup of coffee this morning before we came to church, with Colin Powell and Tom Brokaw. They were on television, we were just... And Tom Brokaw asked Colin Powell, "What do you think about Hillary Clinton?" because, you know, Colin Powell was a secretary of state, and Hillary Clinton was a secretary of state. And Tom Brokaw asked Colin Powell, "Well, what do you think about the E-mail situation with Hillary Clinton, and her using her private server to send classified E-mails?" I was curious as to how Colin Powell would answer this, because I've always considered him to be a very intelligent and wise man—I still do, and this confirmed it once again. Colin Powell said, "That's not for me to comment on, because there are two inspector-generals currently, with their teams, investigating this, and I'm sure they'll bring comment when the time is right. Next question." Colin Powell.

We were singing this morning, and there's a line in one of the songs that really grabbed me. I confess, I don't understand every line in this song, like the, "Loves like a hurricane, stings like a bee..." Or was that Cassius Clay that said that? But there's a line in that song that says, "I don't have time to maintain these regrets/When I think about the way/He loves us." "I don't have time to maintain these regrets/When I think about the way/He loves us." I was talking to some friends at dinner recently, and I reminisced a little bit about my father, and some of you that know me, and have heard me preach more than once, you know that I sometimes tell family stories from my childhood, and, if you've heard some stories about my father, you might have started to put together a picture of the man that I talk about. Some of you have even met my father. He passed away in 1996, but some of you have met him; he came to church several times prior to his passing. I've had a lot of people tell me about how great my dad was. Pete S., I heard something in church recently that I think you'll appreciate. Your son, Scott, was talking, and he was talking about his father. For those of you who don't know, Pete, that's Scott's father. He said,

“My father is probably the smartest man I ever met.” I thought, “Pete should be here right now.” Some of you long to hear those words, and you know what I mean. Some of you, your children are still too young; they’re still learning. May God bless you. Somebody said, “When are you going to start preaching?” I’m almost there. I said to these friends I was having dinner with recently, I said, “You know, I choose to embrace certain memories of my father, but there are some memories I wish I could forget.” I’m just paraphrasing what I said. I remember the hurtful words he said when he drank too much. I remember him missing my high school graduation, only for me to come home and find that he had drank too much that morning and forgot that there was a high school graduation. You see, we all make choices, don’t we? Those of you who have heard me tell loving memories of my father, those are all true, all real; those are the ones I choose to embrace. I only brought up those that I just talked about to make a point: we make choices, as a family, don’t we? We make choices what we focus on; we make choices how we deal with things.

It looks like, after my stories, there’s enough time to bring a little message, so, if you’ll bear with me, I’ll ask you to come with me to the Gospel of Luke. I only have a handful of Scriptures; it looks like five of them today. Five passages. As I was prayerfully thinking about this message, I was thinking about this; I was thinking, “What is it that we, as a church family, do?” I came up with an idea, and I haven’t run it by all the church leadership, yet; I haven’t talked with Parrish and Andy; I haven’t talked to our church board, yet, but I think they’ll embrace it. I’ve got this idea; tell me what you think. If anybody hurts our feelings, we dismiss them from church. If anybody sins, we tell them to leave. If Peter was in our church, and he cursed in the town square, we’d say, “You’re no longer welcome in Christian Fellowship.” I think I’ve got a good plan, here. I think this is going to work. I think what we’ll end up with is the perfect church. There won’t be a pastor, there won’t be ushers, there won’t be singers... But, other than that, I think it’s a perfect plan. You won’t have to pay any rent, because you won’t need a building. There’s some uncomfortable chuckles in the room. But, what do we do with sin? I mean, we’re a church family, after all, and we’re not embracing sin, are we? Anybody here think that what we, as a church family, should do is say, “Let’s sin, and then celebrate?” And, by the way, if anybody might be thinking, “Is he calling someone here a sinner today?” Let me just address that, so you don’t misunderstand: Yeah, I’m calling you a sinner. And, let me walk over here a second (walking over so that he can face his reflection in the mirror), and I’m calling *you* a sinner. Anybody here want to challenge me on that? Because, if you do, I’ve got some Scriptures that we could go to, and remind you that the Bible tells us we’re all sinners (Romans 3:23), and, if you say you’re not, then you’re a liar, and that’s a sin (1 John 1:8-10), so... So, we’re sinners. So, what do we do with sin? I mean, we’re a church, right? How do we handle it? We’ve all been offended, and, even if this is your first time, we’ve probably managed to offend you somehow, already; maybe one of my stories has offended you. We all find somebody, somewhere, somehow, someplace, sometime that we don’t like what they did, and we think they’re wrong. Quite frankly, we’re offended by their presence. I’ve been there.

Okay, one more childhood story, and I hope this will make sense to you. I was about six when we got brand new living room carpet. The carpet that preceded this carpet didn’t have much padding, if it had any padding at all. But the new carpet, it had a thick padding. I mean a spongy, thick padding. I mean, when you walked on it, you felt like you were wearing P. F. Flyers. It was great; it was awesome. It was spongy, bouncy, thick wool carpet over a great... Oh! It was awesome! You felt like you were walking on air when you walked in the living room; it was really cool! So, I did what a six-year-old should do, I thought, which was, I was doing my tumbling routine on the carpet. I was rolling down the living room, and I was rolling back. I was doing somersaults, and I was having a party on this brand new carpet in our living room. My older brother Jim went in the kitchen, and I could hear him talking to our father. He said, “Dad! Dad!” (That’s how Jim talks in my mind.) “Dad!” If Jim was here, I probably wouldn’t do that, but, he’s not, so, “Dad! Pete’s out there in the living room, rolling around on the brand-new carpet.” And my dad came out of the kitchen, and put his hands on his hips, and he looked, and he walked back in

the kitchen, and I could hear him say to Jim, “You’re right, Jim, he is!” You see, Jim wanted me kicked out of the living room, but, somehow my dad thought that that was my living room, too, that I was just as welcome to be in it as Jim was. The fact was that Jim found it unacceptable that I was rolling on this new carpet; my dad thought, “That’s probably what I’d be doing if I was six. I might like to try it now!” So, I let you laugh a little at my expense, but, what do we do with sin? What do we do when someone does something that we don’t understand? What do we do when somebody does something that we do understand, and it’s wrong? In Luke chapter fifteen, Jesus was dealing with some folks, and I know you’re familiar with this passage, but I’m not going to start in verse eleven like you might expect; what I’m going to do, instead, is actually start in verse one:

**Luke 15:1-2** *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying...*

So, have you got the picture? You’ve got these people that the Pharisees aren’t impressed with.

**Luke 15:2** *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners...*

Here’s our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—the Pharisees and scribes, these religious folks, these church folks, are murmuring about Jesus, and how He’s dealing with sinners! “He’s got these publicans, these sinners, and He’s talking to them, and they’re *listening* to Him!” and the scribes and the Pharisees are beside themselves. “He should be talking to us; He’s talking to them! Why isn’t He talking to perfect people, instead of those sinners, those publicans?”

**Luke 15:3-5** *And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders...*

Can you picture a shepherd, putting a sheep, unless it has a broken leg, putting it on his shoulders? This is some kind of affection for this lost sheep, isn’t it? Put it on his shoulders, *rejoicing!*

**Luke 15:6** *And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.*

Again, can you imagine the shepherds, going, “Well, that’s kind of what we do, isn’t it? You had a hundred sheep; you lost one, you put it on your shoulder, and now you want us to have a party.” “Rejoice with me! I found my lost sheep!” I imagine some of the shepherds were saying, “He’s a little wacko. He’s a little crazy. He carried this sheep in, like a prize, and said to the other guys, who do the same thing...” They’re all smelling the sheep, you know. I mean, it’s not like they don’t understand what it is they do.

**Luke 15:7** *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

Well, we know everyone needs repentance, but, Jesus was giving them a little grace, a little space, a little room; that’s what I think.

**Luke 15:8-9** *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth*

*her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.*

Again, Jesus is going a little overboard, don't you think? I mean, don't you think He's dramatizing this a little much? I mean, it was her piece of silver; she already had it. She didn't have a party then. But, now she's lost it, she misplaced it, she lights a candle, she sweeps around until she finds it, and now she wants to throw a party for this piece of silver. I think Jesus is sort of overplaying His hand a little bit. I think he's making a big to-do about nothing, but, He's got an audience, and He's trying to teach them something. He's trying to teach them, "What do we do with this sinner?"

**Luke 15:11-12** *And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me...*

I'm not going to read that, but, if you're taking notes, we're going all the way to the end of the chapter, verse thirty-two. So, perhaps you're very, very familiar with this passage, with the father with two sons; it's often referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Sometimes we hear it preached on from the perspective of the father's love for the prodigal. And I think that's exactly true; I think there's a great message in that point of the father's love for the prodigal. But now we've been reminded of the audience that Christ was speaking to that day, and their heart wasn't rejoicing for the lost that was found, for the sinner that was redeemed. They had hardness of heart. They were, in this parable, the older brother. They had their arms crossed, and they weren't happy at all. The younger brother did all the sinning in the story. He took the money, he went to town, he wasted it on riotous living. We could detail that, but I don't think we need to. He did everything wrong you could do. He did everything wrong you could do. And the older brother's out in the field, working hard, doing his chores. Come in early, staying late. Probably doing extra work, because his brother's gone. The parable doesn't say that, but you could sort of put that in there if you think it fits; I think it does. He's probably doing extra work this whole time his younger brother's out... Maybe even some people carrying messages back, "You know what he's doing? How he's dragging your family name through the mud?" The older brother's getting more bitter by the day, and then the younger brother gets hungry and comes back. I sort of leaped through some passages, some verses there. But, the younger brother comes to himself, he gets hungry, he comes back, and the father sees him a long way off. The father doesn't waste a moment. He doesn't fold his arms; he doesn't say, "Well, let's see what he has to say for himself." Instead, he says, "Kill the fatted calf. Put the ring on his finger. Get sandals for his feet." The older brother, out in the field, hears some music. He doesn't ask the father why. He doesn't ask the father why; he asks one of the servants, "What's going on?" He didn't have a close enough relationship with the father to go to him, he just said to one of the servants, "What's going on at the house? What's going on?" "Well, your younger brother..." The servant knew. "Your younger brother's back." "Oh, really? Huh. I hope they're killing him." Now, I'm not sure, but I don't think this takes place in Texas, but if it did take place in Texas, then they could have said, "Well, he needed killing," and then killed him, and then that would have been that. In fact, actually, if you understand the custom of the day, he was dead. But the father broke all the rules, didn't he? The father broke all the rules in this story. He didn't have to receive the younger brother back, his younger son. He could have said, "You're dead to me. Go eat in the pigpen." Remember how humble the young man's heart was when he came back, the younger brother? "Maybe I could be a hired servant. Maybe I could be a hired servant. Just an hourly wage. No benefits or anything, just a hired servant." The father broke the rules; he brought him back. The story reminds us that, if we're not careful, we could be the older brother, out in the field. We could have all the right credits to our name, we can do everything right, make every service; come early, stay late.

You ever do a job in church—boy, I wish I could tell you this was one I'd never done—you ever been picking up the chairs after the service, or washing the windows, mopping the floor, or doing something, and you're thinking, "Where's everybody else?" Anybody? Looks like lots of us. It's easy to find fault with them, right? Especially if you see them a little while later and they've got ice cream on their face. "You were at Dairy Queen? And I was mopping your floor?" I know I'm an old guy. There's an old movie; I hope somebody here has heard of it or saw it, "Cool Hand Luke." He says, "Luke," the warden says, "What you doing there, Luke?" "Putting the dirt in your hole, boss." If you saw it, you know right where I'm at. Luke can't do anything right. Because the boss had told him to dig a hole. "What's that dirt doing in my hole?" He's looking at a flat piece of hard ground. "I don't know, boss." See, the warden has put Luke in his place, and Luke needs a little humbling. Luke needs a little humbling. If you haven't seen the movie, it's just about a guy in prison, and the warden is going to "help" Luke. I know this isn't a normal message, but there is a message here. It's up to you whether you want it or not. The warden's going to "help" Luke, so he teaches him a lesson by saying, "There's some dirt in my hole." Of course, if you look, you don't see a hole, but Luke's smart enough to exactly what he means when the warden says, "What's that dirt doing in my hole, Luke? You'd better get it out." Like twelve hours later, maybe, twelve hours of back-breaking digging, he's got a nice hole dug, that's when the boss says—I don't remember how he said it, right now, but—"Why isn't that dirt in my hole, Luke?" "I don't know, boss." Luke can't get it right. Whatever he says is wrong. I was in boot camp, and the drill instructor said—company commander, we called them back then; now I think you call them best friends—the company commander told us to stand at attention, and he left the room. He came back; it seemed like a long time. It was probably fifteen minutes, but fifteen minutes at attention in an empty room, you know, he wasn't even there. He went out and got coffee. He came back, and he said, "ARE YOU ALL TIRED OF STANDING AT ATTENTION?" Pretty obvious answer to that question; we said, "Yes, sir!" in unison, all of us. He said, "YES, SIR? WELL THAT MEANS YOU NEED SOME MORE PRACTICE AT IT. STAND AT ATTENTION." And he left the room. So, he came back fifteen minutes later; he asked the same question, "ARE YOU ALL TIRED OF STANDING AT ATTENTION?" We figured now we know the answer to this question. We said, in unison, "No, sir!" He said, "YOU LIKE IT? KEEP STANDING AT ATTENTION." Sometimes church is like that, we just can't seem to get it right. We try; we think we know the rules, we think we know the answers, but we've got dirt in the boss's hole, and he wants it out, and then he wants it back in. We're just going through the motions, but we don't seem to quite know how to deal with this thing called sin.

Well, Paul was writing to the Church at Galatia, and he said:

**Galatians 6:1** *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual...*

That's you. "Ye which are spiritual." That's us. The good ones. The ones who aren't making any mistakes.

**Galatians 6:1** *...ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of...*

What? "Meekness." What? "Meekness." Why? "Considering thyself." Not because it's the right thing for your brother or your sister, but, watch this:

**Galatians 6:1** *... considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

If you're not careful, you're going to fall into the same trap. If you're not careful, you're going to make the same mistake. If you're not careful... It goes on to say, in verse two:

**Galatians 6:2** *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

It's not enough to bear your own? It's not enough to bear your own? We've got to bear each other's burdens? Are you kidding me? I've got to bear his burden? Her burden? Who's bearing mine with me? Well? You know what? sometimes your brothers and sisters are bearing them with you, and sometimes they're not. I know this isn't a pleasant message, but I think that, as a church, we need to decide, what are we going to do with sin? I told you my plan: Just, anybody that commits sin, they're no longer welcome. I think it's a good plan. It will be inexpensive. We won't need a building, church, we won't need any of it. We can go to the beach Sunday morning, because we won't have anywhere to go. We won't have to go to church. We won't have to sing, "Goodbye, World, Goodbye," we can sing, "Hello, World, Hello. I'm going to Hell, I know." Or, we could say...

Well, I'd better get back to scripture. I told you I was going to tell another story, but, I sort of made a liar out of myself, didn't I? How about Romans 6? What does it say about this sin thing?

**Romans 6:1** *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

Hey, that's a good idea. Maybe that's what we should do with sin. Grace abound when we sin, God forgives, let's just run up the bill! Right? When I was a kid, my dad belonged to the Pittsburgh Athletic Association. It was a place in Pittsburgh where people could go and eat; they had a bowling alley and they had a swimming pool, and they had a restaurant. They didn't take cash. You had to be a member to go there, and you just had a membership number. My dad's number—I still remember—was 4343. My brother, Steve, was old enough to drive, and have a date. He said to my dad, "Dad, I'm a little short on cash, could I take my date to the Pittsburgh Athletic Association and use your membership?" My dad said, "Sure, you could do that, Steve, that'd be fine." I remember hearing my dad call Steve into the room when the bill arrived. He said, "How could you possibly, how could you possible spend this much money in one night?" He said, "You ate four times! You bowled! You each had a massage! What possibly did you *not* do?" and Steve said, "I don't think we missed anything, dad. I think we did it all." And this was my dad's response: "I think you did. I think you did. I think I'm going to fame this; this is a new record." And that was the end of their conversation, and I thought, "Man, when I'm old enough, I'm doing that same thing." But I didn't. Why did he get away with it? Gee, I just think I got cheated. I got robbed! Bamboozled, hoodwinked, I got... He got away with something that I didn't get away with. You see, he understood that grace would abound. He understood my dad would ultimately smile. He understood my dad would give him a pass. Sometimes we understand our Heavenly Father. We can sin; grace will abound. After all, He can only yell for so long, right?

**Galatians 6:1-2** *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

So, we're not supposed to sin, yet, if we do, there's forgiveness? Seems like we ought to. No we shouldn't, and you know why. I'm digging around you today. I'm especially digging around—watch this—I'm especially digging around those who have been doing it right for a long time, because we're the ones that forget what we've been forgiven of. You see, I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't chew, I don't go with those that do; I'm pretty good. And, there's examples of people that felt that way in the Scripture. I fast. I tithe of all I get. You know, God, you really might want to put my face on a poster, you know, "Be like Pete. You ought to be more like Pete. That's what you ought to be like." Except God knows Pete and there's no such poster. But, how about us perfect people, when we haven't made any mistakes in a long time, when we're not fresh out of forgiveness. Anybody here need forgiveness recently? Don't raise your hands. Anybody here need forgiveness recently? I mean *real* recently? Maybe today? Because those of us who are thinking, "No, not me; I've been doing pretty good," it's pretty easy to find fault with those

who do. Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. I know I'm not preaching loud; I'm not preaching evangelistic, but, if you'll let this still water flow, it will run deep.

So, I think I was about to go to verse three here:

**Romans 6:3-5** *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

**John 8:1-4** *Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees [There they are again!] brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*

A lot of questions need to be asked at this point: How do you know that? Where were you? Who brought her to you? How did you find her? What were you doing? Why weren't you in Temple?

**John 8:4-5** *They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses...*

They're going to quote Moses to Jesus; they don't understand. That's all you need to know: they're going to quote Moses to Jesus; they don't get it. But, wait a minute, do we ever quote Moses to Jesus? "But, Jesus, the Law says..." You see, most of the time that Jesus was in trouble, it was because of how He dealt with sinners. It's quiet in here, Parrish; we were all screaming and shouting and loving the Lord... But, you see, most of the time that the religious folks—by the way, that's us...

I went to the doctor not too long ago, and I have carpal tunnel. Anybody ever have carpal tunnel? My hands hurt, and fall asleep, and I don't have good coordination, and it's happening in both hands. My doctor, he's an interesting guy—he's a nut. I'll give you an example, before I finish this story, of what a nut he is. He's a retired Air Force colonel. He was a doctor in the Air Force, and he knows I was in the Navy. So I had cancer removed from my face. They got it all; everything's fine. It was a malignant melanoma, you know—Oh, I'll tell you a story about that. So, when I had that malignant melanoma, they cut this thing off my face, and they said, "We'll send it out for biopsy, and, if you don't hear from us by next Friday, call us, and we'll tell you what it is. So, by the next Friday, I hadn't heard from them—I wrote that on the calendar—and I called, and I said, "Hey, did you hear anything about that thing you cut off my face?" And the receptionist, she must have been pretty new. She said, "Well the doctor's on vacation; he won't be back until next week. He left yesterday. But, let me look at your chart." And she said, "Ohhhh. You've got cancer, and you've got the bad kind. Anyway, he'll be back next week." I don't think you're supposed to do that. I don't think that's in the receptionist's handbook. I just don't think you're supposed to do that. So, anyway, I called him, after he got back. They had me come in; they cut it all out. So, now, when I get these ugly bumps on my head, I'm supposed to tell my doctor. So, I told my doctor—this is my new doctor, the nut—and so he— I'm preaching, I'm not telling jokes; I'm preaching here. There's a message here—so I told my doctor, "I have this spot, and I had a malignant melanoma." So he said, "Well, we've got to cut that thing off. He did; he scooped it out right there. I thought we were going to talk about this for a minute; next thing I know, he's putting gauze on my face. He said, "You've got to hold that there while I get some tape." And then I'm thinking, "I didn't know you were packing." He had his knife; he must have had it in a pencil drawer or something. He scooped that thing right out of my face. That looked big. I'm thinking, "That's got a root on it." It looked like a tooth. I'm still preaching; stay with me. So, I called him when he told me to call him, and he was in; he hadn't gone on vacation. And he says,



“We’ve got to talk.” So I came in, and he says, “Oh, I got your file mixed up with someone else. Yours is fine; it’s just a barnacle.” I said, “Barnacle?” And he said, “Yeah, isn’t that what you sailors get?” So, I had a barnacle on my face, and sometimes we think it’s cancer, and sometimes it’s just a barnacle, and sometimes we think someone ought to die for their sin, and they’ve just got a barnacle that needs to be cut off. And here’s the interesting thing: we don’t always know; we can’t always tell from our perspective. We’re not always able to tell what God is doing in someone’s life.

So, what is it we do with this sin? Do we condemn? And then do we take it so lightly that we don’t care? You know, let’s swap wives, and, you know, just run around and act crazy and don’t live right? But I think we need to live right. I think we need to do our best to do our best to be good Christians. But I think when we see our brother overtaken in a fault, that we should restore such a one with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted. And, I think, if we work on it, we’ll find a balance where we can be a hospital for sinners and still a sanctuary for saints. I think we can be both at the same time. I think that we can do both, and I think that, to be a great church, to be the church that God’s called us to be, we must do both. I really believe with all my heart that, at the end of the day, that we have to do both, that we have to be able both to love our brother and our sister when they disappoint us by sinning. And we have to be able to rejoice with people when they’re doing well. And we have to find a way to have a balance in it, and let God be the judge. For, when we hear Christ say, “**Judge not,**” He says that with what judgment we judge, we shall also be judged (Matthew 7:1-2). Saints, it’s a tough thing to be a Christian in this day and age. People will frustrate us; they’ll hurt us. Sometimes we’ll feel like we have to take sides, because we love two people from church and they’re fighting with each other. Maybe they got divorced. Maybe you feel like you have to pick one over the other. Maybe you feel like, “You know what? How do you deal with that?” And it might be hard for some of you to hear this message—and I mean this sincerely, I’m not trying to be clever—you’ve never really committed the “big” sins, but I’m struggling to find the term, “big sin” in the Bible. I’m struggling to find the ones that God winks at, the ones He doesn’t really care about. I know, we could get into a study about how God feels about this that and the other, but, I think, pretty much, we’ve got to accept the fact that sin is sin. And some sins, because of our nature, we find more offensive than others. Some sins, because of our upbringing, we find more offensive than others. Some sins, because of our past sins, we find more offensive than others. So, what do we do in the body of Christ with sin? We can’t ignore it. We have to call it what it is; sin is sin, and we need to carve it out. But, when it happens, or it’s our brother or sister that’s in sin, or it’s our perception that they’re in sin—how about that?

I’m going to close in a moment, but before I do, I want to tell you this: when I look back over my life in ministry, when I look back over my years before I was a pastor and as a pastor, and some of you will want to shout hallelujah when I say this—some of you have been the recipient of my misbehavior—I will tell that the times I’ve acted worst as a Christian was when I had the perception of someone else’s sin and I thought it was my job to deal with it. Colin Powell said this morning, he said, “It’s not for me to comment on that.” I’m glad we had breakfast with him this morning, Rod, I needed to hear him say that. I think this might be the first time I’ve quoted Colin Powell in a sermon, but he said, “It’s not for me to comment on that,” and I said, “That’s what I was looking for, Lord. Thank You.” It’s not for me to comment on that, but it is for me to pray on that. It is for me to be a Christian on that. It is for me to live and love with it, in terms of loving my brother or my sister, my mother, my father, my son, my daughter, even if I perceive their sin.

So, as I close today, I want to ask you to pray with me. God Almighty, help us to be the church You’ve called us to be. Help us to be, Lord, able to see You in every situation. And, when we find ourselves acting a little bit more like the scribes and the Pharisees than You would have us to, help us, Lord Jesus, to remember that charity does cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Help us to now be judgmental in a way that could cause someone to stumble. Not taking it lightly, but letting You be God, and us be Your children. We thank You in Jesus’ name, and the church said amen.