

we're going to open God's Word and we're going to continue this series, Lies That We Believe.

You know, we've talked about a lot of lies that some people believe about God.

And today we're talking about a really, really prevalent lie that maybe at one time I believed in my life.

It's the lie that God understands that all we are is we're just saved sinners.

That's all we are.

I think that's a lie.

I was doing some counseling one time with a middle-aged man, and he was struggling with porn.

And he kept hitting that roadblock.

He'd try to do better.

He would confess his sin to God, and yet it would come up again and again.

And he just felt powerless.

And part of our conversation was, he said, I know I'm saved, but I'm just a sinner.

that's self-defeating talk, right?

So that's what we're going to be looking at today.

Is it really true that that's all we are is saved sinners?

Well, if you have your copy of Scripture, open it up to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, 2 Corinthians 5 verses 14 through 18.

And as we

get into this, let's look at the truth about our original nature first, because it really is true that, hey, I hate to break it to you, but we're born into sin with a sinful nature.

And that's what the Bible says in Ephesians 2, 1.

We are dead in our trespasses and sins.

We're by nature, our original nature, children of wrath.

In other words, we're born physically alive but spiritually dead.

And when we have neither the presence of God in our lives nor the knowledge of His ways, we then act out on that.

So we've lived independent of God.

And this independence is what we call life in the flesh.

That's doing your own thing.

It's living according to the world system.

independent of God.

According to Paul, the problem with that is the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit.

They are in opposition to each other.

Why?

Because the Holy Spirit, like Jesus, will not operate independently from God the Father, and yet that's a chief characteristic of your flesh.

You want to do your own thing.

You want to go your own way.

You want to do those things that please you.

That is the characteristic of the flesh.

And so such is the state of fallen humanity.

We are spiritually dead, separated from God, and the heart, which is the center of our being, well, Jeremiah says, is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.

So every aspect by the fall of Adam and Eve
was corrupted.

And so here's the deal.

The fact that we can never totally on this earth, in this body, be sin free, that causes us to think that, well, maybe that's all I am.

I'm just first and foremost a sinner.

Now, I may be saved, but I'm still just a saved sinner.

And so when that's the case, isn't life frustrating when that's how you see yourself?

All I am is a safe sinner and yet you want to have a Christ-centered life.

So you're always frustrated.

So the false narrative is I'm just a sinner.

That's all I am, a safe sinner.

Maybe you've heard this little song.

Only a sinner saved by grace, only a sinner saved by grace.

This is my story, to God be the glory.

I'm only a sinner saved by grace.

Once I was foolish and sin ruled my heart, causing my footsteps from God to depart.

Jesus has found me, happy my case.

I now am a sinner saved by grace.

Now I get what they're saying, right?

We all get what they're saying.

But is that really theologically accurate?

Is that all that you are?

Is that really true?

So people who claim that they're just saved sinners and yet they're deeply troubled by when they mess up and they sin, I mean, it'd be like an apple tree getting bent out of shape because it's producing apples, because it's an apple tree.

Just like if you think I'm just a sinner and you're producing sin, well,

Why should that frustrate you if that's all you are?

But we're going to see why that is not the case.

So again, scripture this morning, 2 Corinthians 5, 14 through 18, verse 14 begins, for Christ's love compels us.

We have died to ourselves in Christ, yes?

And he died for all that those who live should no longer
one from a worldly point of view.

Don't tell each other that all you are is sinners.

Though a true Christ follower has died to the old self.

There's no dualism going on.

It's like, well, which

but from God's perspective.

Therefore, anyone in Christ is a new creation, period.

That's God's perspective.

Now understand, right in this to you guys and me, to Christians.

And he's helping us see in Christ.

In Galatians chapter 2, he writes this verse 20, some of you could quote it back to me, for I have been crucified with Christ is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh, in the body.

I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself, delivered himself for me.

That's who you are if you're a true believer.

And then the passage David

read by the Apostle Paul, and he talks about what's going on, this pull in our lives in Romans 8, 5-9, that those who live according to the sinful nature set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Now I've got to point something out.

A lot of times I will preach from the New International Version.

I like it.

I really do, especially if I'm preaching a storytelling sermon.

I really like the NIV.

And I go back to like the 84 NAV, right?

A lot of times I use the English Standard Version because it's one of the most accurate translations to the original languages.

And so I like that.

One thing I don't like about the NIV is this one passage that I'm reading.

It's a passage David read.

For those who live according to the sinful nature, it reads.

ESV says flesh.

Greek word sarks.

That is a much better translation in this one small case out of the whole Bible, right?

Because what you've got to put out of your mind is that you don't have two natures that are battling out.

You don't.

You have, according to 2 Corinthians 5, you have one true nature.

You are a new creation in Christ.

You have one nature in Christ.

And your old nature died when you took on the new nature that Christ gave you.

Now we get it.

We still have to battle this stuff, don't we?

The flesh and the world order.

We certainly have to battle against the flesh.

But that's different than having two beings in you, 2 natures that are trying to duke it out.

That isn't what Scripture says at all.

So the New Testament narrative is this.

I'm a St.

Is anybody brave enough to say that with me?

Say it with me.

I am a St.

Who do you think you are, right?

Well, when I think of St.

I think of Roman Catholic saints.

I have a lot of Roman Catholic friends, right?

And you can think of those saints.

It starts with Saint Mary, that they call the Mother of God.

Saint Joseph, the patriot St.

of workers and husbands.

So husbands, there you go, Saint Joseph.

Saint Peter,

patron St.

of popes.

Saint Patrick, patron St.

of Ireland and engineers.

Anybody an engineer?

He's your patron St.

Saint Nicholas, patron St.

of children, sailors, and bakers.

Any bakers out there?

He's your patron St.

Saint Francis of Assisi, patron St.

of animals.

And yet we know biblically, that's what we're interested, right?

Biblically, a St.

is a believer in Jesus

Christ, who has been set apart by God and made holy, declared righteous.

See, that's that whole doctrine that you need to know, right?

The imputed righteousness of Christ.

You've heard that?

Yes?

It's a major doctrine in the Bible which says that when you put your trust in Jesus Christ, when you stop trying to work your way to heaven and jump over however high that bar is,

and you put your trust in Christ, you received Him, He gave you His righteousness.

He imputed His righteousness in you.

So when God looks at you, He can declare that you're justified.

You are righteous in Him.

Nobody can take that away from you.

Yes, you are a saint when you're in Christ Jesus.

So

In the King James version of the Bible, believers are called saints or holy ones or righteous ones more than 240 times.

Unbelievers, that's what Christians are called, unbelievers are called something different.

They're called sinners over 330 times.

So clearly in the scriptures, St.

is used only, for believers.

those who have trusted in Christ, who have His imputed righteousness, not your own, His, His

perfect righteousness.

And of course, the New Testament gives ample evidence that as believers who have received the imputed righteousness of Christ and who are bound for heaven, we still mess up, don't we?

still have sin that creeps into our lives.

But the New Testament never identifies the believer as a sinner or a saved sinner.

No.

You're a new creation in Christ.

You're a saint.

You are in Christ, one of Paul's favorite terms.

Put a picture up here.

The next one, a butterfly, right?

And we all know the story of this, right?

That this is an ugly worm.

This is a caterpillar that has mush inside itself and is crawling around on the ground and up trees, but you guys know what happens with God's appointed

beautiful act of nature that he carries out, right?

That thing at some point in time, that caterpillar, he spins his cocoon and he goes in and he turns into this chrysalis.

And eventually he comes out with wings in this beautiful, beautiful insect that we all know and love.

And by the way, the root word for chrysalis is Christ, is Christ.

And it's this transformation, this metamorphosis.

Now, here's my point.

This butterfly now doesn't have to crawl around on the ground.

It doesn't have to be stepped on by animals or people.

It can soar.

So A butterfly would never proclaim, I am just a worm with wings.

Right?

But let me ask you, how many times in your life when you've messed up big time and maybe you lost a battle against your favorite sin or whatever or your bad attitude or your worry or fear or your doubt or whatever it was, and basically that's what you said, I'm just a worm with wings.

Don't say that.

That's not who you are in Christ.

That is a lie.

Romans 12.1 talks about this metamorphosis, this transformation.

that comes about and this transformation of the mind in Christ where we don't have to be conformed to the world anymore.

You don't have to be conformed to the people in the office or the high school or in your neighborhood or your kids or grandkids.

You don't have to.

You are a new creation in Christ.

So here's the bad news and good news.

Sin remains, yes,

but it doesn't have to rain.

That's the difference if you know what your identity is.

In Christ Jesus, we've been raised up with Him to a new life, a new identity.

We've received the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We've put on Christ.

Our citizenship now is in heaven, not on earth.

But we still live in this old body which contains the remnants of sin.

We still have our old narratives.

old lies we believe.

We're new people spiritually, but we have old memories and old habits that we have to struggle against.

The default orientation of your original nature of sin, we all know that, but your new nature's default is not sin, but love for God and really that you want to obey Him.

You want to.

Ephesians 2 speaks this beautifully in verses 1 through 5.

where Paul writes, as for you, were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live.

It goes on, verse 4, but because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions.

It is by grace you have been saved.

Somebody say amen.

This is good news.

This is good news.

I love Neil Anderson.

He's written many, many books, but he seems to always come around in this focus about what our true identity in Christ is.

He says this, despite the fact that every believer at times lives according to the old self, like Paul, they are new persons, new in relationship to God, new in themselves, and that change takes place

when we come to Christ.

And it involves 2 dimensions.

First, we have a new master.

He writes this, as mortals, we're just mortals, we have to live under one of two powers, right?

Either our Heavenly Father or the God of this fallen world.

You're just a mortal.

And so you're going to live under the authority and power of one of those two things.

But when you choose Christ, you're choosing to be that new person transformed with a new identity, and you're choosing to live under the kingdom, the authority, the reign, the rule of our

Heavenly Father God.

But there's a second change he writes, and that's a change in the nature of believers so that the propensities of his life or her life and the deepest desires of their hearts is now oriented toward God.

See,

I think you really do want to and I want to please God most, right?

If you would tell me, no, really my deepest desires and my focus in life is to please myself or to please sin, I would say you're not a believer.

Because that's what changes.

Your nature changes.

And you want to love God.

You want to seek Him.

You want to obey Him.

You want to.

That's your new nature.

Colossians 3.3 says, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

There's been a change.

There's been a change.

And so now it's a matter of abiding in Him.

We sang that last song about this, abide in me.

John 15, 4-5.

It's an invitation by Jesus, abide in me.

Stay in me, remain in me, and I'll do that in you.

Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in me, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I'm the vine, you're the branches.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much, what?

Fruit.

Because apart from me, you can do nothing.

Yeah, you can do a lot of stuff.

You can do some things.

You can't do anything that will last forever.

See, I want to be involved in things that will last forever, that never pass away.

How about you?

Like the Word of God in the souls of men, people, people around you.

Jesus says, abide in me.

Here's the catch.

See, Jesus is the vine, the life force that gives us the branches, the life that we need, and that produces the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, et cetera.

cut off from the vine, the branches can't produce fruit.

But the power of production is not in the branch, it is in Jesus, the vine.

So let me give you an example.

So orange tree, a navel orange tree.

Some of you might know this, but the way that they produce a navel orange tree like that, is so sweet and juicy and good to eat and make orange juice from and all that,

is they take a root stock, I guess I'll call it that, right, of an ornamental orange tree that would never produce that kind of good fruit.

But they let that tree grow up and then they cut it off and then they graft in a little bit of a sweet orange like this.

They put it down in there, they protect it, put hormones in it, and it starts growing up.

And it becomes this navel orange tree.

Now, it's only one tree when it's fully grown, yes?

And yet, anything below that is just rootstock.

Anything above it is the navel orange tree.

But nobody, my point is, nobody looks at a grove of oranges like that and says, well, that's just actually a grove of rootstock.

No, it's navel orange trees.

They would identify the trees by their fruit, what they produce.

So Jesus says, right, you will know them

by their fruit.

That's how we identify one another.

Paul says, Therefore, from now on, we recognize no one according to the flesh.

Don't look at other people by their rootstock the way they used to be.

You recognize them by their fruit.

They are new creations in Christ.

We don't judge other people by what they used to be.

Recognize no one according to the flesh.

2 Corinthians 5, 16.

I remember when I was on a mission trip down in Argentina years ago, and I was invited down by the IMB to preach, kind of like a renewal revival thing in a little town, a little church in La Plata outside of Buenos Aires in Argentina.

So I went down there and stayed with a

Argentine family.

They couldn't speak any English.

I only knew a little bit of Spanish.

And then I worked with the pastor of this local church and another missionary.

And every night I would preach, but every day during the day I would go out and we would knock on doors or visit members.

And I remember this missionary and I going to this man's house and had been struggling.

I mean, really struggling.

He wasn't living the right way.

He was a believer.

but he was not investing in his true identity and his true nature.

He got caught up with some things of the flesh, right?

And so this missionary was speaking to him in Spanish, and I could understand enough to know he talked about the two dogs.

The 2 dogs.

Have you ever used this illustration or thought of it?

It's like, there's two dogs living in you, right?

There was a house with two dogs.

There was a white dog, that's a good one, the black dog's a bad one.

And

which dog is going to be master of that house?

Which dog is going to rule in that house?

It's the one that the owner feeds.

So he's making the point, feed the white dog.

Feed your new nature, not your old nature.

And I get it, and it makes perfect sense, yes?

In other words, don't feed your flesh.

But that whole concept stuck, and I use that illustration in English, by the way, and then more I thought about, is that really true, that in me,

There's these two natures, these two forces, and they're doing this, and they're equal, and they're both alive.

And I just have to feed one more than the other so that the good one takes over, not the bad one.

Well, let me just say this.

That's kind of jacked up theology.

You are a new creation in Christ.

You're a navel orange.

You're not just rootstock.

You have one true nature.

Yes, you got to battle against the flesh, of course.

We have the remnants of this fallen world all around us and in us.

But you have a new nature in Christ.

And here's the thing.

I've discovered in my life and also counseling a lot of people that the best way to fight your signature sin, whatever that is, through your identity.

Not through self-deprecation.

Oh, how could I do that again?

I'm a sinner.

I don't have any power.

God forgive me.

I promise never to do that or look at that or say that or think that again.

Oh God, help me.

That ain't a way to do it.

Yeah, when you fall down, you repent, you get back up, you start walking the other way, you ask forgiveness, you talk to your Heavenly Father about it, but you do that based on your identity in Christ.

Like, wow.

I'm better than that.

That's not the real me.

Yeah, I messed up, but that's not the true me.

That's not my identity.

Lord, help me to walk and think and speak and act and live based on my new true identity in you.

That's the best way to fight sin.

It isn't beat yourself up.

How can I do that again?

It's standing in your new nature.

John of Kronstadt, a Russian Orthodox priest from way back in the late 1800s, he ministered at that time in Russia in a city that was just rampant with people in dysfunction.

Alcoholism was everywhere.

People were dying with a bottle in their hands.

And none of the other priests of his day would dare venture out of their churches out onto the bad streets of the city

to help people.

They waited for people to repent and come to them.

Time out.

That's a lesson for Knoll Avenue Baptist Church.

You think people are just going to show up here on a Sunday morning?

Who doesn't?

What non-believer just shows up to church unless the Holy Spirit is leading them or you've invited them?

So he didn't stay in his church.

He went out to where the people are.

That's the lesson here, right, for all of us.

And he started to minister to these people who were in the gutter, who were drunk, who were physically ill.

And he would go over and he would lift hungover, reeking people out of the gutters.

And he would hold them in his arms and say, this is beneath your dignity.

You were meant to house the fullness of God.

You were meant to house the fullness of God.

Don't demean your new true identity in Christ.

See your brokenness, I know this is a cliché, your brokenness does not define you, but it's really true.

I was thinking about it in my former church and going down the list of the types of people we had.

And I could do it demographically, I could do it military, non-military, leaders, not leaders, people of wealth or nothing at all.

I mean, all that.

But I was thinking about it.

Here's my list.

Alcoholics, adulterers, sexually abused, physically abused.

We had one murderer, those who suffered bankruptcy, divorce, those who fought against depression.

mental illness, fear, anger, and all of them were on the journey to recovery.

And everybody I mentioned in that list, they weren't sinners, they were saints.

Get it?

That's how God looks at you.

They weren't sinners, they were saints.

And when we start living by our new true identity, it changes everything in how much victory we have in our lives and whether we have the guts to share our faith at Quick Trip or wherever you did last week, right?

It changes everything.

We've got to act like a St.

Old lies are hard to change and this one is really hard.

The best approach is to keep soaking the truth of God's Word about your identity in Christ, practice spiritual discernment, and be part of a community that will reinforce those truths.

See, God is in the business of changing names and changing lives.

Think about it.

Abram to Abraham.

Sarai to Sarah.

Saul to Paul.

And he's in the business of changing your name and mine from sinner to saint.

So trust him and claim your new identity.

Matthew West, a contemporary Christian singer, wrote this song a few years ago.

Hello, my name is Regret.

I'm pretty sure we have met.

Every single day of your life, I'm the whisper inside that won't let you forget.

Hello, my name is Defeat.

I know you recognize me.

Just when you think you can win, I'll drag you right back down again till you've lost all belief.

Oh, these are the voices.

Oh, these are the lies.

And I have believed them for the very last time.

And then he writes, hello.

My name is Child of the One True King.

I've been saved, I've been changed, and I have been set free.

I'm no longer defined by all the wreckage behind.

The one who makes all things new has proven it's true.

Just take a look at my life.

Hello, my name is child of the one true King.

I've been saved, I've been changed, and I have been set free.

Is that your story?

Do you know

that you have trusted in Christ to be your one and only Savior, you can't get there without Him, that you need His imputed righteousness, not your own, you'll fall short.

Have you given Him your life?

If not, what's holding you back?

This is the day of salvation, Scripture says.

This is the day to become a new creation in Christ.

And you can do it by calling out to Him right now as I'm talking.

You talk to Him and say, God, change me.

Make me a new person from the inside out.

Change that old nature I was born with into one true new identity in Jesus.

Jesus, I trust in You.

What a great prayer to change one's life.

See, God is in the business of dealing with His saints.

He's going to grow his church through his saints.

He's going to make an impact in this world through his saints.

He's going to be glorified through his saints.

He's going to give good gifts to his saints.

He's going to answer the prayers of his saints.

When that story, it's actually two stories.

Here's part one.

And remember part one when I get to part 2.

There's a family.

We just got back from Texas, run dinner real quick.

for my daughter's husband's command ceremony at Fort Hood.

Anyway, there's a family that we know that we love that moved to Texas.

And I knew we were going to be kind of close in the area of Central Texas with them.

I was trying to figure out a way that I could see them.

I knew time was short.

We weren't going to be down there very long.

I really wanted to see them.

I kind of had mentored their son.

It's Rob.

And Pradeepa, she's originally from Sri Lanka, Robin Pradeepa.

And he was a general, general, I wish.

He was a colonel in the army and retired and have two kids, Trinity and Gabe.

And I kind of mentored Gabe.

Anyway, really wanted to see them and trying to find a way.

And I just kind of said, God, just kind of work this out, you know.

And anyway, it was going to be hard for us to see them.

That's story one.

Here's story two.

My son-in-law, in the command ceremony, it's a change of command, he gets command of these 100 and some soldiers at Fort Hood.

And it was up to him and his wife, they had to provide refreshments afterwards in another building on that post.

So we had the ceremony, it was great, went to their building, and he had catered Chick-fil-A.

And so there's the Chick-fil-A

what did they have?

I guess they had nuggets and stuff like that and some salads and some cookies, a bunch of Chick-fil-A stuff, enough for everybody.

Well, we went and it was Caleb and Elise, my daughter and son-in-law, and his parents were there, Susan and I, and there were some other officers, kind of staff people.

We kind of just sat on the tables and waited.

And those army enlisted

Troops went through, cleaned everything out.

There wasn't one thing left.

So we said, okay, well, when this is all over, let's go to Chick-fil-A, right?

We'll get our own.

So we decided we'd go to Chick-fil-A, but then

Caleb's dad said, why don't we just go on post here and we'll go to the commissary and we will, there's a food court there.

So we'll do that.

Okay.

We're out in our cars, went to the commissary, went in the commissary and the 1st place there was a Chipotle, which I know my daughter loves and her husband loves.

We talked about going in there, but then somebody said, well, now let's go down to the rest of the food court, see what's there.

So we did that, went down there, end up eating at a Charlie's.

It's like a Philly steak thing, right?

And so we get a table and we're there fairly early, right, technically before lunch, and there's not a lot of people there.

And all these tables, we sit down, we start eating.

I'm halfway through my meal and I hear, Pastor Steve?

And I turn around and there's the family right behind me, Rob and Pradeepa and Gabe and Trinity.

And it's like, we had this great time of catching up and hugging each other.

And then they, and I think this might have been the purpose, they especially talked with my wife Pradeepa did about some missionaries, all of this support, and they're going through some marriage problems and it's tough.

And so

We're going to pray for them even harder and all of that.

But I'm thinking, how did this happen?

If we hadn't run out of Chick-fil-A at the ceremony, if we hadn't changed our minds about going to Chick-fil-A, if we'd have gone into the Chipotle instead, you know, none of this would have happened.

And for them just to be there, which was not even the city that they live in, thank you, God.

My point in that crazy story is you have a good, heavenly Father, and he sees you as a called out holy saint of the Lord.

So pull up your britches, put your big boy pants on, and have some pride in him, not yourself, and live according to your new identity in Christ.

Because you can do all things through him who strengthens you, yes?