The Curve And The Cure — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 3:4–8 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, March 5, 2023 · *The Fall*

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So singing matters, thank you for singing well this morning. And if you have your Bibles, we're going to be in Genesis chapter 3. And know that this chapter of the Bible is not everybody's favorite. We're starting this series. We've been in the book of Genesis since the first of the year, but this series on the fall, we just started last week, and it's everyone's least favorite topics of sin and shame. And it's not just about sin and shame. Thankfully we'll also see God's provision and promise. But nobody likes talking about sin with the caveat, as long as it's not their sin.

I do think people like to talk about other people's sin. Is that—is it not true or not? And everybody likes to talk about what's wrong with the world. This is what the—growing up in Roby, I'd go to the coffee shop. I hated going to the coffee shop because I knew all those old men talking trash about all those people, they would talk trash about me when I wasn't there, because I was living a life worthy of coffee shop talk when I was growing up in Roby. I wonder what the guys are saying now.

Everybody loves talking about other people's sins, pointing the finger: "Well, here's what's wrong with the world, and if we could just get this guy out of office or this guy into office, if we just get this ideology, get rid of that and put this in place, then everybody would be better and everything would be fixed." And that's an inevitable human tendency. I don't think—you'll never be able to turn that off. But I do think one of the things that Genesis will encourage us to do is before you point the finger, look in the mirror, because at the root of real evil is a man in the mirror.

The great Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, he wrote a book called *The Gulag Archipelago*, and it was talking about kind of the evil of man in the Soviet labor camps,[1] and just kind of like, how does that happen? How can people like rejoice in genocide and all that stuff? And he says that "the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor

between classes, nor between political parties either," but that the line separating good and evil passes "right through every human heart." And that is what Genesis is going to show us this morning.

That at the heart of human brokenness is sin in every human heart. At the heart of human brokenness is sin in every heart, and every heart has a sin problem. Literally every single human being with a heart has a sin problem, and there's got to be a remedy to that problem of sin in this heart before we can begin to remedy kind of the universal societal sins that are at work in the world. And so that's what I want us to look at this morning. We're going to call it the problem of the curve.

And I want to look at the problem of the curve, the consequences— And if you're just joining us, we go through books of the Bible in our church. So last week we were in verses 1, 2, and 3 of Genesis chapter 3, and this week we're going to pick it up in verse 4. And just so you don't kind of jump in halfway through just to give you a little context. In Genesis 3 you have what's called the fall of man, and the fall of man is put in terms of this couple, Adam and Eve, in this garden called paradise that God had created, and there is a serpent that comes to Adam and Eve in the garden, and that serpent represents Satan or the adversary, the devil.

And he tries to get Adam and Eve to do the opposite of what God said they shouldn't do. So God says, don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And Satan comes in and says, Eve, you should really eat of this tree. You should really eat of the fruit of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that's essentially—we're jumping in mid-conversation in verse 4, and we're going to read to verse 8. So let's pick it up in chapter 3, verse 4. The serpent says to the woman, you're not surely going to die, because God knows when you eat of it, that forbidden fruit, your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil.

And so when the woman saw, now I don't know how much time transpired between verses 5 and 6, but some kind of time went by because the woman eventually begins to see that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, and so she took of its fruit and she ate, and she also gave some to her husband—notice this—who was with her, and he ate. So ladies, it's not your fault. Not just your fault.

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths, and then they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And so we've got to remember in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, you've got creation given, creation is paradise. Genesis 2 closes with man and his wife together, naked, unashamed, this wonderful communion between man and woman and God and man.

And Genesis 3 brings the wrecking ball, and they go from communion with God and one another to covering their nakedness and hiding in shame. They go from acceptance and oneness with God to shame and hiding from the presence of the Lord. And all of it because of this thing called sin. And people don't like to talk about sin. We don't even use the word sin very much anymore and some of that's because the cultural baggage that has been attached to the word sin is not always super helpful for understanding it in terms of how the Bible presents it.

Some of it is just because people don't like to talk about their problems or their weaknesses. Maybe you grew up in a home where all anybody ever wanted to talk about was what you did wrong and how you weren't good enough and to think for you to come to a place like this in church and you want to grow in your walk with God and you want God to love you, and then you read a passage like this and talking about how I'm not good enough and I've sinned against God and God might be angry or upset with me, that's the furthest thing from what you want to do, and I sympathize with that.

I understand a lot of us grow up in homes like that and it really damages our view of who God is and who we are. But you can't really get the biblical solution until you fully understand the biblical problem. And the biblical problem is there is a reality called sin in the human heart and it has disrupted our fellowship with God and our fellowship with one another. So before we look at the problem of sin and the consequences, let's try to get at a good definition of what sin actually is because I grew up in a church where I went to church from a very young age.

I feel like I got born into the Sunday school class sometimes. Like my father and mother conceived and had child and the very next day it was Sunday school and my dad was doing his deaconing thing and my mom was doing her nursery worker thing and then boom I just showed up in the church house and I grew up in the church. I don't know how many sermons I heard on sin, but I heard a lot of sermons on sin. And when I left that environment, sixteen, whatever age I was, eighteen years old, my basic definition for sin was missing the mark.

Sin is transgression, sin is violating God's design or violating God's commands. God says don't and you say do, that's called sin. It's a no-no, it's a do-not-do list. There are do lists and — You don't do what's on the do list, and you do not do what's on the— Well, you do what's on the don't list, and you do not do what's on the do list, and that's the kind of the essence of sin. And I'm not saying that's a bad definition. I actually think it's a fine definition that certainly makes sense of Genesis 3 because God says don't do this and they do what God says don't do.

So is that sin? Yes, that's sin. It's a true definition, but it's not a complete definition. I don't think it's a complete definition. I think a better, fuller way to understand sin, besides just

missing the mark, is what Saint Augustine talked about in his commentary on this Christian doctrine. Saint Augustine, by the way—Saint Augustine. Who's for Augustine? Anyone? Augustine or Augustine? Augustine, raise your hand. Augustine? Double of you. Okay. All right, it's not the grass. I don't know if the grass was named after the church father. It doesn't really matter.

I don't know why I'm talking about it. But Saint Augustine or Saint Augustine talked about sin as a— He used the Latin phrase *incurvatus in se*. I love that phrase. It makes you sound smarter than you actually are. Sin is *incurvatus in se*. Oh, sounds very special. All it means is to be curved in on the self. *Incurvatus in se* means to be curved in on the self. I've got a little picture here of a man with his iPhone looking at his face. No, it's not an iPhone, but he's curved in on himself and that's the problem of the curve.

Every human being who's ever been born has a curve problem. And that curve is you're curved in on yourself. Now a lot of people say, well, what's wrong with being curved in on the self? You got to have self-esteem. You want to love yourself. Even the Bible says love your neighbor as yourself. So before you can love your neighbor, you got to love yourself. And modern people who have that conviction are not a hundred percent wrong. Yes, you don't want to be a self-loathing kind of person. You need to have good self-awareness, good self-confidence in relationship to who God is and who you are in relation to that.

But that's not what he means by *incurvatus in se*. What he means by this phrase and what Martin Luther who took this phrase and really developed it in the Protestant Reformation, what he means is you take God's gifts, you use other people, and you use even God himself for your own agenda. In other words, you are oriented and inclined towards making yourself the most important thing. So when you make a friend, you may say I'm making friends with you because I seek your welfare and I really want you to do well in life, and so let's be friends.

But deep down underneath that subtext, maybe you don't even say it to yourself, but there is an inclination when you make a friend to say, "Hey, he'd be good for this and that. He'd be good for helping me get to that goal and I want to actually make a network of friends and I'm going to have this friend and this friend and this network, because if I build this network I can actually advance in my career." And what's deep down motivating your desire to love people is loving yourself. You're using them, you see, you're using them as a means to an end and that greater end isn't God.

It's not his glory. It's not their good. It's you and your flourishing and your agenda. So you use people, you use God's gifts like talents and abilities and money and wealth, prosperity—again, it's not to say that that stuff's bad, it's not bad, but when you use that stuff for you and you alone, or mostly for you, at the expense of God's glory and the good of other people or

the good of your children, that's the curve, right? That's the curve problem. Everybody has the curve problem. And some people will even use God Himself.

Talk about self-righteousness. "Well, I go to church and I'm well respected in the community, and I would never do those kinds of things, and I've got the title of pastor or I've got the title of deacon, and I'm a big deal." And what's underneath that kind of statement is the curve. It's the problem of the curve that it's all about you, as the old country song by Toby Keith says, "I want to talk about me, want to talk about I, want to talk about number one, oh my me my, what I think, what I like, what I know, what I want, what I see."

I want to talk about me. It's the great me monster, the problem of the curve is the great me monster. And the problem is everybody who's born into the world is born with the me monster in their heart. Even from a very young age. This is why they call them the terrible twos instead of the wonderful twos, because the me monster is running the show. And yes, when you get older you maybe get a little better at hiding it and you get a little better at kind of putting band-aids around it so that it doesn't become too offensive.

But if you were honest with yourself, or if someone who knew you better than you know yourself was actually showing you what was going on, they would show you've got a curve, and that curve is a problem. And it's disrupting your fellowship, it's disrupting your communion with God, your creator, and it's disrupting your community with the people that you love. And so how does that happen? That's what Genesis ultimately shows us. And I want to show you the three phases. There's a turning away from God. There's a turning in on the self, and then you're going to see a search for salvation or a search for security.

So the first phase is what I'm going to call dethroning God. It's in verses 4 and 5. It's turning away from God. So we looked at this last week just a little bit. We scratched the surface, but I want to go a little deeper today. Dethroning God, verses 4 and 5: "The serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" So the curve always starts with the dethroning of God.

I like *The Message* translation of James chapter 1 verse 15. I don't recommend *The Message* as like a good study Bible, but it's actually kind of helpful the way that it translates James chapter 1 verse 15 where it says that lust gets pregnant and has a baby, and that baby is sin. If you'll go to advance to the next slide, I think it's on the next slide. "Lust gets pregnant, and has a baby: sin!" Nope. The slide that says dethroning God, there it is. I love this definition of sin because it shows you that sin always begins with a legitimate desire, but something—a seed gets planted in that desire to make the desire corrupt.

And the corruption of that desire when it's fully brought to term, that is what leads to sin in your life. Now how does Satan do that? Well, if you pay attention in Genesis 3, verses 4 and

5, he starts with dethroning God, and he dethrones God in your life through a process of deconstruction. Deconstruction is a popular word in our culture today. We deconstruct our faith. A lot of young people are all about deconstructing their faith, deconstructing authority, deconstructing Western imperialism, deconstructing heteronormativity. Deconstructing everything in our culture. And academic utility aside, which you know you can have an argument for the academic utility of deconstruction.

The process itself and the fruit of the process is as old as the Garden of Eden, and it ultimately boils down to, "Did God really say?" When Satan deconstructs your faith, he begins by compromising God's word, and then he finishes with criticizing God's character. And you see both in Genesis chapter 3, verses 4 and 5. First he compromises the word. He says, did God really say? And then in verse 4, he says, You will not surely die. If you read a couple of verses before that, you see that Satan will sometimes exaggerate God's word, sometimes he will add to God's word, sometimes he'll subtract from God's word, sometimes he will water down or dilute God's word.

Sometimes he'll just straight up contradict God's word. But the goal, and it's usually small, small things over a long period of time, but the goal is to compromise God's word in your heart, to say God's not really in charge, God's authority is really not good, his design is really not wise, and that's the starting of dethroning of God in your life. God's got to come off the throne so that someone or something else can sit on the throne and usually that someone is you. After he compromises the word, then he criticizes God's character.

You see that in verse five. He says God's jealous of you. He's not seeking your good, he's trying to restrict you. He's trying to repress you. He doesn't want you to be who you really are. He doesn't want you to grow and become knowledgeable and wise. And after he compromises the word and criticizes God's character, I think he sits back and he waits. And the reason I think he sits back and he waits is because most people don't jump into big, big sin in their life. Most people drift into big sin in their life over a season of carelessness and Satan's temptation, of compromising and criticizing.

I say that because in verse— So how much time transpires between verse 5 and verse 6, I'm not really sure, but I know in my life and can see happen in other people's lives that Satan is oftentimes not in a hurry to destroy your life. He will put little hooks in your mouth and he will wait till the maximum amount of damage is done to you and your people that you love, and that's when he pulls the hook. And so I think he sowed the seeds. I think he deconstructed God's authority and then he sat back and he waited for the crisis to come or for the moment of choosing, you know, life sometimes has a way of forcing us into a decision, forcing us into an act of choosing, am I going to do what God wants or am I not?

That day comes and Eve chooses wrongly because God had been dethroned. And the second phase is that she redefines the good. Once God has been dethroned in your life, someone else

has to become the standard of truth and goodness and beauty. When God's not that authority, someone else has to define it, and that someone else is Eve. So it says that she saw it was good for food. Every human being who has ever lived is searching for truth and goodness and beauty. But when you turn away from God and you begin to turn in on yourself, what you do is you begin to redefine what's true and what's good and what's beautiful.

And in the case of Eve, she looks at that tree that God said is not good. Don't eat from that tree, and she says, "God is wrong and I'm right." The tree is good for food. The tree is a delight to the eyes. The tree is to be desired, to make one wise. And she took of its fruit, and she ate. Now, I think it's interesting how Satan appeals to these different layers of Eve's desire. We talked about this a little bit last week, how Satan will appeal to your reason, he'll appeal to your gut, to your desires, and he'll appeal to your fears.

And I think you can see all three. It's appealing to her reason. It's a delight to the eyes. That looks good. That seems good. That seems reasonable. It appeals to her flesh, her hunger, her passions, her appetites, and then it appeals to her fears. That's what's going to make me wise. And underneath that desire to be wise is a desire that if I'm not, if I don't know what God knows, then I won't be sufficient. I won't be— This is, by the way, the same three desires that we just read about in 2nd—or 1 John chapter 2, when he says, don't love the world.

Don't love the world or the things of the world, because the world with its desires, aka the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions, is not from the Father but is from the world. It's a commentary on Genesis 3. And the problem isn't the desire necessarily; it's the way that you meet those desires. Do you meet them through the Lord and his design or do you meet them through the world and its design? Sometimes people will talk about this as disordered affections, disordered desires.

The desires are fine, but when you put them out of order, in other words, when you put something or someone other than the true ultimate, who is God Himself and His design for satisfying desires. When you make a secondary thing an ultimate thing and you take the ultimate thing and make him a secondary thing, you're disordering God's design for your affections. And that disordered design results in a redefinition of good, a redefinition of truth, and a redefinition of beauty and you see that with Eve. I think it's a cruel trick of the enemy because once he gets you to turn from God, he knows the one thing that's going to make you happy isn't on the table.

It's kind of like a magician playing a trick. And he says, pick a card, any card. And you think to yourself, wow, look at the options. And wow, look at how much permissions I have, and I can express myself and I can do anything I want. All the while Satan knows, just like a good magician knows, the true card they really need isn't on the table, because he's got it in his

hand. And he uses distraction and diversion and sleight of hand to keep you from picking the card that you really need to pick.

And that's the story of civilization, that's the story of humanity. Satan has got us turned away from God, looking for pleasure and ambition and satisfaction and all of these other places, because we've redefined what's really going to make us happy. Jeremiah talks about this in the Old Testament, Jeremiah chapter 2. He says, my people have committed a double evil. They've forsaken me, the fountain of living water—so there's the turn—and then they've hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. In other words, they've turned in on themselves and they're searching for security or satisfaction in these broken cisterns.

After sin has gotten you to turn away from God, he will get you to redefine the good and he'll get you to pursue legitimate desires through illegitimate means. Ambition's not bad, right? We could all say we need ambitious people. We need people who are ambitious because ambitious people run the world. And we need people who can help run the world. But when that ambition— When the why behind the ambition becomes self-glory, fear of not measuring up, that ambition has become an idol. The desire is not the idol. The means of satisfying the desire, the reasons behind why it must be satisfied, that's the idolatry.

Pleasure is not a bad desire. Sex is not a bad desire. Money, having money is not a bad thing, but when you take those legitimate desires and the why behind them, is changed because you turned away from God and now it's about my agenda, it's about my pleasure, it's about if I don't have this amount of money, I'm not safe, I'm not secure. I've got to be safe and secure. That's the idolatry. The problem's not the desire. The problem is the illicit means of satisfying the desire. And in that way sin makes us addicts.

Every person who's a slave to sin— I'm sorry, every person who practices sin becomes a slave to sin, because sin is always enslaving people, because they're drinking water that will never quench the thirst. And so they drink more and more and more and they think, "If I'll just drink a little bit more, then I'll finally be satisfied." And just like every addict, the thing that you used to drink to make you feel good is now the thing you have to drink just to feel normal and you're trapped. And that's how Satan works.

Dethroning God, redefining good, and then the third phase is searching for security. After God is dethroned and good is redefined, the final step is a search for salvation. So in verse 7, the eyes of both Adam and Eve are opened. They knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. I don't think that they didn't know they were naked beforehand. Otherwise, Adam wouldn't have been so excited about a new wife. I think they knew they were naked, but they didn't know that being naked was a problem.

Now they know because they've sinned against God, they've participated in evil, now they know, "I'm defiled. I've done something I wasn't supposed to do, and I've got to cover it up." And so they try to cover it up with these fig leaves, which are obviously not great for making underwear, and they recognize it's not sufficient and so they begin to hide. So here's the thing about sin. Every sin in your life, the final phase involves a search for security. When you're looking for security, no search will ever end the way you want it to end.

Every security you seek to apply to your life to make you whole and to fix your brokenness will eventually prove itself deficient to accomplish what you need it to accomplish. And that's exactly what happens with Adam and Eve. They cover themselves, but it's not sufficient. And so in verse 8, they hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and what did the man and the wife do? They go and they hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

And so every time we try to find security in something or someone other than the Lord, that thing always proves itself deficient. Every search proves to be futile because every counterfeit savior is deficient to actually save. It never actually makes you feel secure. And you— I mean, it's just interesting how this works out in human relationships and human society; you can just see if you watch people that they're searching for righteousness; they're searching to fix the curve. They're trying to fix the curve in their life and the curve that's messing up their family and the curve that's messing up their work.

And they're saying, "Well, maybe if I could just make more money or get that promotion, or if I could just find a spouse, if I could just, you know, do what I want to do with my boyfriend or my girlfriend, then I'll be happy, then it'll be fixed." And you can even see like Hollywood A-list actresses and actors who get the world given to them on a silver platter and still make art that says life is meaningless and it's not sufficient and surely there's more to life than this. It's them looking for security and realizing the thing I thought was going to make me happy, the thing that I thought was going to give me salvation isn't sufficient.

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. It's all because of sin. It's the final phase. It's the worst and cruelest phase of sin, it reels you in and then it leaves you exposed and locks you into the prison of your sin and your shame. And it's not just a problem for Adam and Eve, it's a problem for the entire world. It's why David says in Psalm 51:5, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Paul, when he's quoting Romans chapter— I'm sorry, Paul is quoting Psalm 51 in Romans chapter 3.

And in Romans chapter 3, he talks to religious people and irreligious people, and he says, whether you're a self-righteous Pharisee trapped in Judaism or you're an irreligious Gentile living an immoral life, you're the same. I know you don't look the same, but in God's eyes, you're the same. No one does good. "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does

good, not even one." And so what's the result? The result is brokenness. We're going to look at the consequences next week between human beings, our relationship problems, and the relationship between men and women, we're going to examine that next week.

But the final story, the end of the story is brokenness. Sin produces brokenness. The wages of sin is death. Living life outside of God's design invites suffering into your life and at the heart of all brokenness is sin in the human heart. And we have broken relationships, broken marriages, broken schools, broken bullies, broken friendships. Broken jobs with broken systems and broken co-workers and broken bosses, broken promises, broken hopes, broken dreams. It's all brokenness, the wages of sin is brokenness. Some people don't talk about brokenness. Some people talk, "I got issues."

This is how modern people talk about sin. "I got relationship issues, I got financial issues, I've got issues at work." What they mean by that is, "I've got a sin problem—my boo has a sin problem and is making my life miserable." And if I was honest, I'd talk about how I have a sin problem and I'm making his life miserable. How many of your problems would be solved overnight if the problem of the curve wasn't present? How many of your marriage problems are because of the curve? You may not be willing to admit it, but a lot of your problems if you're married are looking at you right in the mirror.

It's not just them. You are bent out of shape. And a lot of your problems with your children, prodigal sons or daughters, it's not that they're a bad person. They're bent in on themselves and they're trapped and they can't bend themselves back. And you can't bend your spouse to straighten her up or him up, and you can't even bend yourself back to where you need to be. You're broken, and there's no way to fix the brokenness. Every tool we try, every method we deploy proves itself deficient. So the only real way to fix the curve is to reverse the curve.

I know it is bad news. It is bad news. I think an analogy that's helpful: imagine a steel pole gets bent. So, like, say Superman bends the pole and says, "Okay, now you bend it back." They even have these contests of the world's strongest men trying to do that. But if you had a thick enough pole of solid steel, I don't care who you are, no one's bending back the pole. That's the reality of human brokenness. And so what God does in Genesis, He doesn't fix the curve. What He does is He gives them a covering sufficient to postpone his judgment.

So in Genesis chapter 3 verse 21, it says that the Lord God made skin garments or skin coverings for them, "garments of skins." As far as we know, this is the first animal death in the creation. So everything was hunky-dory until sin entered the world, and instead of Adam and Eve suffering immediate death for their sin, a death of a substitute is given so that they can be cast out of the garden and live the rest of their lives in brokenness. That idea of a sacrificial, an atoning sacrifice, that gets built out more as you read the rest of the Old Testament.

Especially for this audience who is just entering into the promised land. They've been slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. They walk through the Red Sea. They see God's miraculous provision. And one of the ways that God delivered Israel[2] from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt is through these plagues. And God would send these plagues and does anyone remember the grand finale plague that that God used to break Pharaoh's back? Yeah, he sent a death angel into Egypt, and it took the life of the firstborn of every person. And he tells his people, he says, if you want the judgment of God to pass over your house, what do you have to do?

Now remember this? You got to sacrifice the lamb. And when you sacrifice the lamb and you put the blood of the lamb on your doorpost, what happens? The death angel will pass over you. That was the beginning. And then when Moses gets the law, he gets a more sophisticated version of that idea. You have the Levitical system, the sacrificial system that's built out in the book of Leviticus. If you're in your Bible reading plan and you're in the middle of Leviticus, just read chapter 17 and quit. You're done. You know, you've got the main point.

Because in chapter 17, it shows the reason for the sacrificial system: "The life of the flesh is in the blood." I've given you this sacrificial system so you can make atonement for your sins, or "for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." In other words, a life has to be given for a life. You deserve death. If you don't want to die, someone else has to die in your place. And so I've given you this sacrificial system so that the blood of bulls and goats can teach you the significance of your sin.

So the blood of bulls and goats can teach you the holiness of your God. And it's not going to fix your curve, but it will postpone my judgment. And so they do it every year. The day of atonement, they would sacrifice two goats actually. One goat would get slaughtered and his blood would be put on the mercy seat to make atonement for the sins of the people and then the second goat would be released to walk off as a way of symbolizing that your sins are being cleansed and wiped away as far as the east is from the West, and then one year would go by and they would have to do it again.

And all of that's hearkening back to the Passover Lamb, all of that's hearkening back to Genesis, God making provision through atonement. If you're taking notes, theologians call this substitutionary atonement. God addresses the problem through atonement. But the problem was it didn't fix the curve. And that's Paul's point in Romans 1, 2, and 3. He says the law was given not to save you. It can't save you. All it can do is show you your need for salvation. That's why God sent Jesus Christ into the world, because Jesus was going to accomplish through his life and death what the law was powerless to accomplish through its rules and regulations.

And so when Jesus comes on the scene, he lives the sinless perfect life of love and obedience to God the Father. Jesus does what none of us could do of living a life unlike Adam. He was

the second and better Adam. He never sinned against God. And then he willingly lays down his life as an atoning sacrifice on the cross, meaning he stands in our place for our sins. And what's so fascinating is they would celebrate Passover every year to kind of remind themselves of this dynamic. Jesus celebrates Passover with his disciples during the Lord's Supper.

In fact, we call it the Lord's Supper. It's really Passover redefined by Jesus. And when Jesus celebrates Passover with his disciples, he says to them, Moses, deliverance from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt, the suffering of your forefathers in the wilderness, the promised land, that ain't the grand finale, that was all signs, that was all symbols, that was all pointing to someone and something greater, and you're looking at him. And the slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt was pointing you to a greater slavery to sin and the bondage of sin, which is shame.

And I've come to deliver you from your sin. And the bread of suffering of your forefathers wandering in the wilderness, that's actually my body suffering, being broken for you. And the blood of that lamb that was sacrificed so that the blood could be put on the doorpost and the death angel would pass over you, that's actually pointing to my blood. I'm the real lamb, and my blood is going to be shed so that your sins can be forgiven and you can be reconciled to God. And so he says, take and eat.

The serpent says to Adam and Eve, take and eat. They took and they ate and it broke the world. Jesus says, take and eat. And when they repented of their sins and they put their faith in Jesus as the true Messiah, the true atoning sacrifice, God saved them from their sin and began to heal their brokenness. And so what we're celebrating in the Lord's Supper is ultimately the cure to the curve. Okay, our curve is broken. We are bent and we can't bend it back. So what's the only way to take a pipe of steel that's been bent and bend it back in shape?

The only way through human effort that it can be done is if an outside source of heat gets applied to that curve and heats it up hot enough so that someone strong enough can bend it back where it needs to be. Okay, that's what happens when you believe in the gospel. That curve is our sin. That heat is the message of the gospel. That heat is that Jesus died in our place for our sins. And if we'll repent of our sin and put our faith in Jesus, we'll be reconciled to God.

That message, that gospel message that I'm far worse off than I could have ever imagined, but in Christ I'm far more loved than I could have ever dared to hope. That message warms your heart. It takes your heart of stone and gives you a heart of flesh. It takes what's broken and heats it up enough that you can allow God through the Holy Spirit to straighten out that curve. And maybe this morning the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. "You've got a curve problem, and I can fix it. All you have to do is turn around."

And you say, well, I've done too much, I've sinned too far, I've run too long, and I don't know you, I don't know your story. I'm sure that's true. I'm sure it's bad. But where your sin is great, God's grace is greater. And when you think that you've run way too far from God, and, "I've got to clean my life up and I've got to do better things and I got to get myself in shape, and then I can turn back to God"—the reality is you may think you're way, way far from him, but he's right behind you.

You say, "Oh, I can't see him." You can't see him. All you got to do is turn around and he'll be right there. Just like the story of the prodigal son who came to his senses, and he says, I got to get up and I'm going to go home to my father. And when the father saw the son from a long way off, what did the father do? He ran to the son, and he embraced him and he kissed him and he put a ring on his finger and a robe around his shoulders.

And that's exactly how your Heavenly Father will respond to your repentance. Your problem is you turned away from God. You turned in on the self. You're looking for security; you can't find it. And all you got to do is wake up, come to your senses, turn away from yourself, turn away from your sin and turn back to God and He will receive you and he will save you. And he will cure you of your brokenness. In part, now slowly over time, but in full when he comes again, when Christ comes again in glory.

And so the opportunity for us this morning as we enter into a time of taking the Lord's Supper is to respond to that invitation. If God's close enough to you that you can hear the Holy Spirit saying, "Come home." And that's all you need to know. All you got to do is come home. Just turn and head to the Father. I'm going to ask you to bow your head and close your eyes and we're going to have a time of response. Our deacons are going to come down, some deacons and some not deacons, but our ushers are going to come down and help us with the Lord's Supper.

And if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, I want to invite you right now to give your life to Jesus Christ. And I'm going to give you a way to do that. It's not magic. But if in hearing the gospel you would say, you know what, the light bulb has come on today. And I realize God is holy, and I realize I'm not. And that my sin has separated me from God, and I want to give my life to Jesus. I want you to publicly express that. Everybody's got their heads bowed and eyes closed, so no one can see but me.

But I want you to publicly express that just by raising your hand long enough until I can see it: "I know I need salvation and I want Jesus to save me this morning." For those of you who didn't raise your hand, if you would say, "I'm a Christian person, but before I take this Lord's Supper, I want to examine my heart. I want the heat of the gospel to change my heart so that I can be fully surrendered and cured of my curve," I want to ask you, as you've got your head bowed and your eyes closed, to just ask the Lord to expose in you anything that grieves the Holy Spirit, anything that is sin in your life.

And you can't do much about fixing that today, obviously. This is just a moment in time, but you can express true repentance and true faith to ask the Lord, "I want you to cleanse me of this sin and make me righteous." And the Bible says if we'll confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us. And so would you just confess your sins to the Lord right there where you're seated, as a way of preparing yourself to take the Lord's Supper. If you're here this morning and you need to give your life to Christ, when these ushers pass out the elements, you can come down to the front and I'll be happy to talk with you about that.

You can scan the QR code, that'll be up on the screen as well. Father, we thank you for this time as we now respond to the word through taking the Lord's Supper. I pray that our response would be appropriate in light of your holiness and our need for salvation and mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that you have sent him into the world to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves, and we pray that as we respond, we would leave this place fully surrendered, joyful, hopeful, righteous, obedient in all things.

Because if you held nothing back from us, who are we to hold anything back from you? And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "in world War, believe it was world War II"; *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973) is Solzhenitsyn's account of the Soviet forced-labor camp system, where he was imprisoned from 1945 after his arrest at the end of World War II; it is not a book about the war itself. Source: The Gulag Archipelago, Part IV, ch. 1, "The Ascent" (quoted at the Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn Center, solzhenitsyncenter.org/notable-quotations); Leonard Schapiro review, *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 13, 1975. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "God delivered Egypt from slavery to Pharaoh"; the plagues delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. Source: Exodus 12:29–32, 40–42 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩