

# IT WAS JUST A . . .

MISTAKE	KNEE-JERK		"TO ERR IS
LAPSE IN	REACTION	ROUGH	HUMAN"
JUDGMENT	MUFF	SPOT	THING
MINOR		SLIP-UP	MESS UP
SHORT-COMING		DROPPED	SILLY
INNOCENT	FLUB	BALL	FOIBLE
STUMBLE		UNINTENTIONAL	FOUL

"Ah, stink . . . I'm sorry . . . it was just a . . ." READ SLIDE

TR: We say . . .

We say, "It's not really that big of a deal."

***BECAUSE we listen to Satan,***

"Did God actually say,  
'You shall not eat of any tree  
in the garden?'"

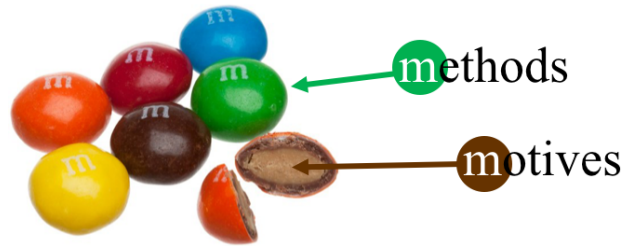


... "It's not really that big of a deal" ... because we, like Eve, listen to Satan when he says, **READ SLIDE**

**TR: We minimize what we've done because we ...**

We say, "It's not really that big of a deal."

*BECAUSE we listen to Satan,  
we give ourselves the judgment of charity,*



. . . give ourselves the judgment of charity.

-- If methods people see are the outside of the M&M candies,  
then our motives are what's going on inside of us.

-- And we usually give ourselves a lot of grace, perhaps more  
than we give to others.

TR: We say "it's not a big deal" because we protest . . .

We say, "It's not really that big of a deal."

*BECAUSE we listen to Satan,  
we give ourselves the judgment of charity,  
we protest BIDMT ("But, I didn't mean to!"),*



**. . . BIDMT, BIDMT, BIDMT!**

**-- Looking at our motives with the judgment of charity, we argue that if we didn't do something from a heart of malice, then "it's not a big deal."**

**TR: Most of us . . .**

We say, "It's not really that big of a deal."

5

*BECAUSE we listen to Satan,  
we give ourselves the judgment of charity,  
we protest BIDMT ("But, I didn't mean to!"),  
we think of ourselves as  
a "pretty good person,"*

**. . . READ SLIDE**

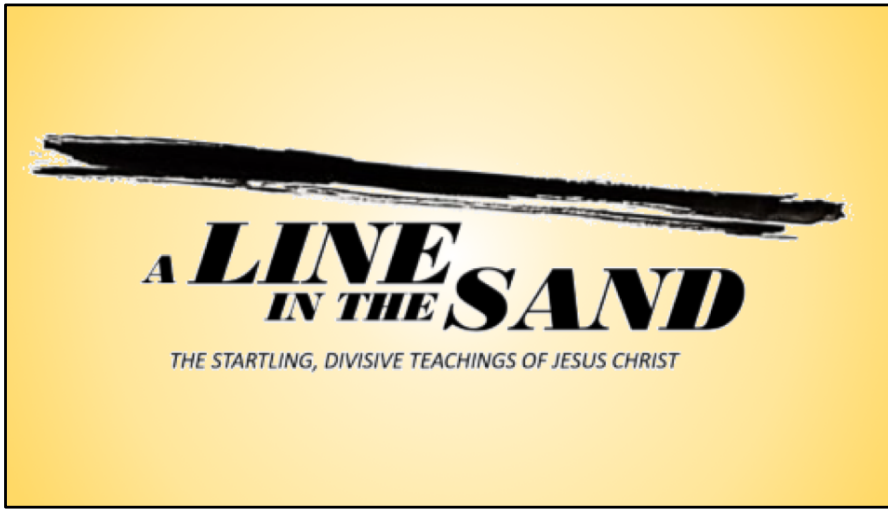
**TR: And, while we may not say it out loud in church, when we .  
. .**

We say, "It's not really that big of a deal."

*BECAUSE we listen to Satan,  
we give ourselves the judgment of charity,  
we protest BIDMT ("But, I didn't mean to!"),  
we think of ourselves as  
a "pretty good person,"  
we compare ourselves to worse folks and think,  
"If anyone deserves to go to heaven . . ."*

**. . . compare ourselves . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: It is into these grains of sand of worldly thinking that Jesus draws . . .**



. . . another line in the sand.

TR: Read with me and hear the startling, divisive words of Jesus.



**Let's start with Matthew 5 and then move to several other texts in the writings of the tax collector called to be an Apostle.**

**TR: Matthew 5:27 . . .**



**Matthew 5:27-29**

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell."

ESV

**Jesus said . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 30 wraps up this section of the Sermon on Mount.**

Matthew 5:30

**“And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”**

*ESV*

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Flip a few pages to the right and settle on Matthew 18 . . .**

**Matthew 18:7-8a**

**“Woe to the world for temptations to sin!  
For it is necessary that temptations come,  
but woe to the one by whom the temptation  
comes! <sup>8</sup>And if your hand or your foot causes  
you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.”**

*ESV*

**Beginning with verse 7 . . . Jesus said . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 8 continues . . .**

Matthew 18:8b-9

“It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. <sup>9</sup>And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.”

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: One final passage is a bit further to the right, in Mark's Gospel . . .**

Mark 9:42-43

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup>And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.

ESV

**Beginning in verse 42 . . . Jesus said . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 45 continues . . .**

**Mark 9:45-48**

**“And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup>‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’”**

*Some manuscripts add verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48)*

*ESV*

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: This passage ends with a confusing two verses . . .**

**“For everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup>Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”**

ESV

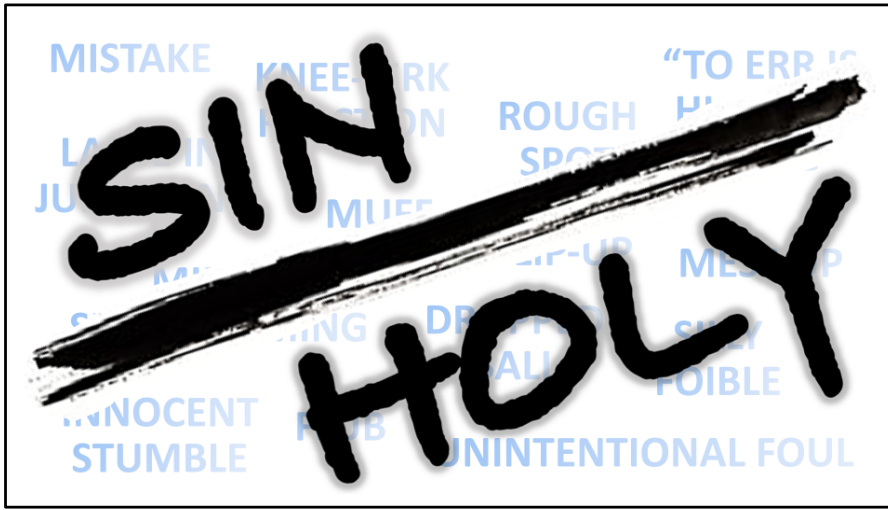
## **READ SLIDE**

**-- This reference to salt probably looks back to salt being included in OT offerings . . . and suggests that believers will have to be willing to be offerings themselves, willing to give up anything and to suffer for Christ’s sake. The salt and fire purify through the hardships.**

**TR: But, even with this point of confusion, don’t miss what Jesus did as recorded in Matthew 5, 18 and Mark 9 . . .**







. . . holiness.

-- Somehow we have want to change a black and white issue and turn it into a gray . . .

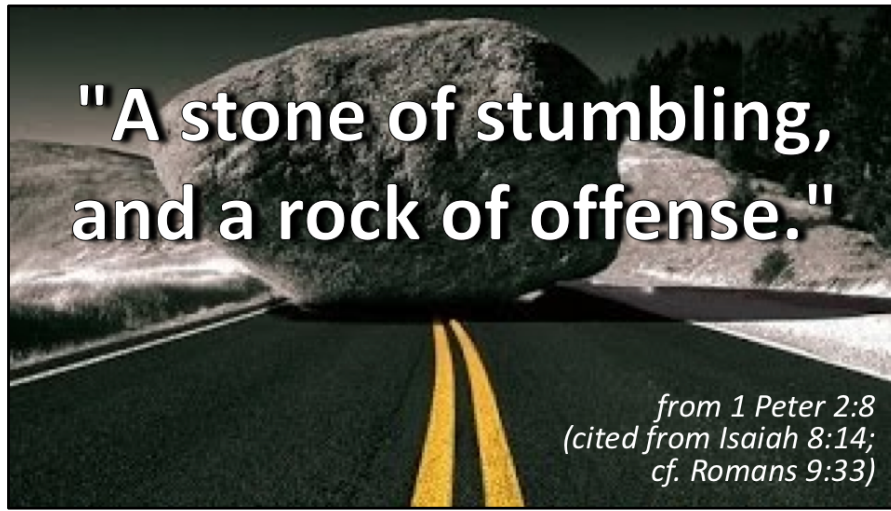
-- . . . a gray that is a fashionable color that “doesn’t look so bad on us.”

TR: Jesus’ line in the sand . . .



**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Clearly, Jesus is . . .**



**. . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: But, what we like to do is read these “line in the sand” texts and then water them down because Jesus is using the figure of speech called . . .**

- . . . a hyperbole (not a HYPER-BOLE).
- An example of this intentional overstatement or exaggeration would be to say . . . A “hyperbole is without a doubt the single greatest thing in the history of the universe.”
  - We can even say it like it was part of an infomercial.
  - BUT, we must not just dismiss the radicalness of Jesus’ teaching so quickly.

**TR: Jesus’ teaching challenges us to not dismiss the accountability we have for both our motives and methods.**

**WE MUST NOT DISMISS OUR  
ACCOUNTABILITY'S . . .**

**LENGTH**

**DEPTH**

**BREADTH**

**We must not . . . READ SLIDE of sin.**

**TR: Think about . . .**

**WE MUST NOT DISMISS OUR  
ACCOUNTABILITY'S . . .**

**LENGTH**

**DEPTH**

**BREADTH**

**. . . the length of our accountability in what Jesus said . . .**

**TR: Let me remind us from the passages we just read . . .**

Matthew 18:8b-9

“It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into **the eternal fire**.<sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into **the hell of fire**.”

ESV

**How long are the consequences for our sin?  
-- Matthew 18 records that Jesus speaks about . . . “eternal fire,” “the hell of fire”**

**TR: Or in Mark 9 . . .**

Mark 9:42-43

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup>And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to **go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.**

ESV

... we read Jesus teaching about hell as an unquenchable fire.

TR: Then He goes on to describe hell as ...



## Mark 9:45-48

“And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown **into hell**.<sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown **into hell**,<sup>48</sup> **‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’**”

*Some manuscripts add verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48)*

ESV

. . . a place “where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched”, quoting Isaiah the prophet.

-- Sin is a big deal because of the length of its consequences.

-- EX: As a kid hearing about “our permanent record.” Some of us have done things that, to this day, haunt us. We yearn to be given a clean slate. Imagine how serious sin is when, apart from the cleansing work of Jesus, there will never be a clean slate . . . into all eternity.

TR: We also need to consider our accountability for another dimension of sin . . .

**WE MUST NOT DISMISS OUR  
ACCOUNTABILITY'S . . .**

**LENGTH**

**DEPTH**

**BREADTH**

**. . . specifically sin's depth.**

**TR: We looked at Matthew 5 a few moments ago . . .**

**Matthew 5:27-29**

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her **in his heart**. <sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell."

ESV

**. . . in the context we hear Jesus saying . . . that we can sin in the depths of our hearts.**

**-- [heart] = seat of government of our personal lives, not just emotions but the headquarters of our decisions.**

**-- We can talk about draining the swamp in Washington D.C. but there is a vile swamp much closer, polluted to its depths by sin.**

**TR: Elsewhere, Jesus tells us we are responsible not only for what we do wrong, but also when we don't do what we know to be right.**

Luke 12:47-48

“And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. <sup>48</sup>But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”

ESV

**In Luke 12 Jesus said . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- Sin's depth goes to what we do wrong but also to what we don't do right.**

**-- We marvel at our own restraint when we say, “You would have been proud of me . . . I didn't kill him!” But, we forget Jesus says we are to love our enemies.**

**TR: Jesus' half brother would later say . . .**

James 4:17

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

ESV

### **READ SLIDE**

-- The convictions of the Holy Spirit over the past months that we have let slip away in the midst of our busyness . . . all those undone good intentions are sin.

TR: Sin's seriousness cannot be dismissed lightly . . . there's the length of the consequences, the depth of sin's tentacles in our hearts, and . . .

**WE MUST NOT DISMISS OUR  
ACCOUNTABILITY'S . . .**

**LENGTH**

**DEPTH**

**BREADTH**

**. . . it's breadth.**

**-- While one of the passages we looked at did speak about adultery in our hearts and the plucking out of eyes, the other ones just talked about sin in general.**

**-- It is not just "big sin, terrible sin, horrendous sin" that should spur us to the radical responses of cutting off our hands and plucking out our eyes.**

**-- It is just "ordinary sins" . . . the everyday variety. "The dandelion sins, not the rare orchid ones."**

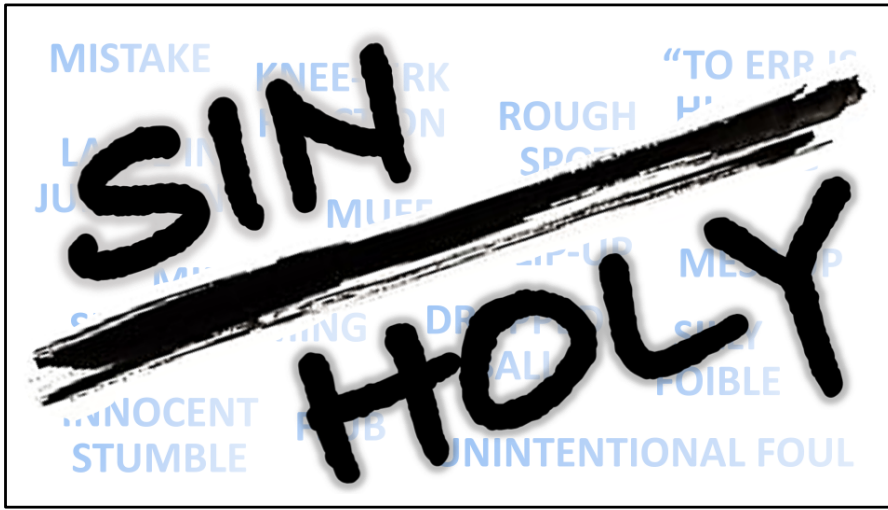
**TR: But, sin's horror is even broader than that . . .**

**"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup>And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.**

ESV

- . . . as we read in Mark 9 . . . READ SLIDE (highlight)**
- We are responsible and accountable for not just what we do and don't do . . . but also the influence we have on others.**
  - Like eating meat offered to idols, we may have the freedom to buy it cheap in the market but it becomes sin for us when we know that we are causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble.**
  - "Don't you see the impact you are having on others?" And we reply, "What is that to me? Am I my brothers' keeper?"**

**TR: Jesus draws a line in the sand . . .**



**. . . and makes it clear that there is a radical difference between what is sin and what is holy.**

**-- Yet, our tendency is to minimize our own sin and “horribilize” the sins of others.**

**-- Jesus’ hyperbole is meant to be a slap in the face, waking us from our stupor of lowering the bar for ourselves, again and again.**

**TR: Our response, if we receive Jesus’ line in the sand, should be like the prophet Isaiah’s response to the holiness of God . . .**



Isaiah 6:3b-5

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!"

<sup>4</sup>And the foundations of the thresholds  
shook at the voice of him who called, and  
the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>And I said:  
"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of  
unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a  
people of unclean lips; for my eyes have  
seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

ESV

**In Isaiah 6 . . . as he heard the angelic beings singing . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- This godly, godly man, when faced with the holiness of God cried out "woe is me." Have we ever done that?**

**-- Have you ever been broken by the overwhelming weight and horror of your sin?**

**-- The sin of your actions and your inaction? The sin of your methods and your heart's motives? The sin of not even considering the impact you have on others?**

**TR: What will it take for us to realize the seriousness of sin? To say, "Woe is me!"**

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR US TO  
REALIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

UZZIAH

**Will it take a Uzziah moment?**

**TR: As 2 Samuel 6 says . . .**

2 Samuel 6:6-7

And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup>And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and **God struck him down** there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God.

ESV



## READ SLIDE

-- King David was ticked when this happened . . . and so would most of us.

-- “Come on, he was just trying to protect the Ark.”

-- The Ark was finally coming back from the Philistines . . .

“yes, they should have used the long poles, but God’s Word doesn’t really mean what it says, does it?”

TR: Or, will it take a New Testament equivalent . . .

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR US TO  
REALIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

UZZIAH

ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA

. . . an “Ananias and Sapphira” moment.

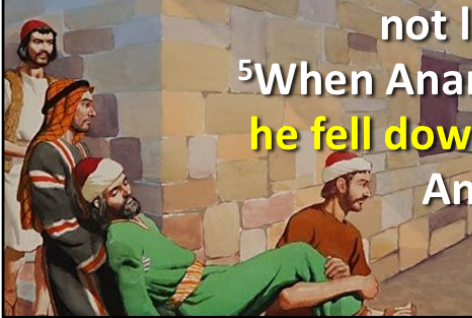
TR: As Luke wrote in Acts 5 about the sale of property, the proceeds of which were given to the Apostles to share with the poor.

Acts 5:4-5

While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God."

<sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last.

And great fear came upon all who heard of it.



ESV

**Peter said to Ananias . . . READ SLIDE  
-- A line in the sand moment, for sure!**

**TR: Perhaps, what it will take, is for the consistent truth of  
the Word to cut deep into our souls . . . as the Psalmist said . .**

.

**WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR US TO  
REALIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN**

**UZZIAH**

**ANNAIS & SAPPHIRA**

**PSALM 36:1-4**

**. . . in Psalm 36**

**TR: A portion of which is quoted in Romans 3's description of all of us being sinners . . .**

Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; **there is no fear of God before his eyes.** <sup>2</sup>For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated. <sup>3</sup>The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good. <sup>4</sup>He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; **he does not reject evil.**

ESV

The Psalmist says . . .**READ SLIDE**

-- Jesus had to draw a line in the sand about the seriousness of sin back then and now . . .

-- . . . because we do not reject evil.

-- We say we “hate” the cloudy weather but sin is just a bit something that we “dislike.”

-- “Oh, that we would save the strong words for those things that truly deserve their forcefulness.”

TR: We need the line in the sand because we are like the disciples, as Jesus faced the weight of our sin in the Garden of Gethsemane . . .



**. . . the night before He was crucified, carrying our sin upon His shoulders . . . we fall asleep.**

**-- Luke 22:40-42 *And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."***

**-- He sweats drops of blood . . . and we fall asleep. Do we understand the seriousness of sin any better than our slumbering forebears?**

**TR: Sin is a big deal. As the Apostle Paul said . . .**



For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

ESV

## READ SLIDE

- We are saved from our sins by faith in what Jesus did for us . . . Jesus has the authority to forgive sin and apply His atoning work to us if we ask Him by faith.
- But, this doesn't mean that we should sin some more so that grace can abound.

TR: And, sin is so serious, especially sin against those who are Christians, that Jesus said . . .

Matthew 25:40-41

“And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

<sup>41</sup>“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Even those of us who have done great works for God, in His name, must understand the seriousness of sinfulness and holiness . . .**

**Matthew 7:21-23**

“Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup>And then will I declare to them, **'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'**”

ESV

**Jesus said . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- These people said the right things and even did spiritual things, impressive things, but in the end they are still labeled “workers of lawlessness.”**

**TR: If we really receive Jesus' line in the sand we will find that when it comes to being saved we can experience . . .**

# ASSURANCE

**BUT NOT  
PRESUMPTION**

- . . . assurance, but never presumption.
- Presumption imagines that sin is not that serious for the one who has prayed a prayer, walked the aisle, been confirmed, or been baptized.
- Sin is always serious.

TR: When the length, depth, and breadth of sin seems to overwhelm us into a “Woe is me” moment, what will win the day is . . .

## Ephesians 3:17-19

... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup>may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the **breadth** and **length** and **height** and **depth**, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

ESV

... the love of Christ ... as Ephesians 3 tells us ... **READ SLIDE**

-- Until we know the horrid dimensions of sin, I doubt we will appreciate the glorious expanse of the love of Christ.

TR: Assurance, but not presumption ... 2 Timothy 2 captures this tension when Paul says ...

2 Timothy 2:19

But God's firm foundation stands,  
bearing this seal:

"The Lord knows those who are his,"

**and,**

"Let everyone who names the name of the  
Lord depart from iniquity."

ESV

### READ SLIDE

- God's seal has both sides . . . the assurance of God's sovereign knowledge that knows us and holds on to us . . .
- **AND** the need to depart from iniquity.
- If there is any sin that we will not deal with, whether we label it big or small, it becomes a sin of the high hand when we do it willfully and defiantly.

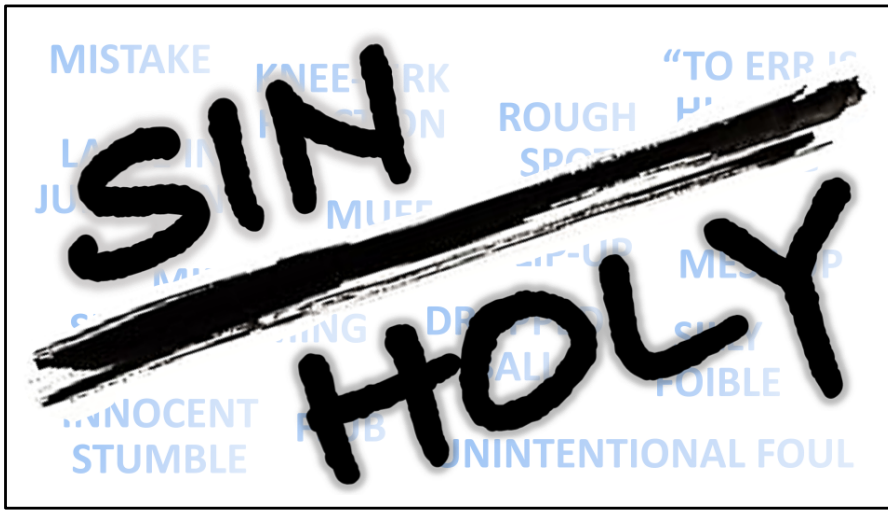
TR: The author of Hebrews certainly pulls out the picture of "the line in the sand" when he wrote . . .

**For if we go on sinning deliberately** after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup>but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: The line in the sand . . .**



**. . . between the sinful and the holy.**

**-- Some say that we shouldn't scare people with the teaching of hell . . . but I don't think they learned that from Jesus, do you?**

**-- Some say that we are basically "good people," but I don't think they learned that from Jesus either, do you?**

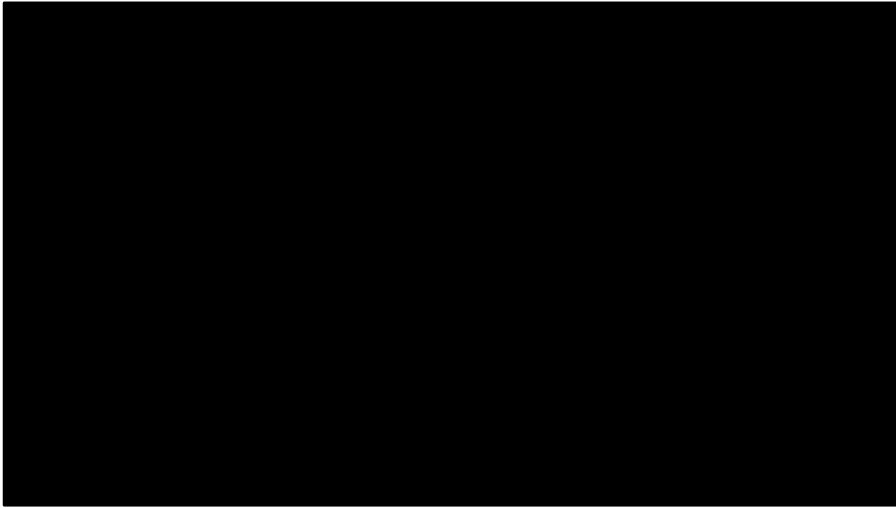
**-- Sin is not a "to err is human" thing . . . it is an affront to our Creator's holiness and it must be dealt with.**

**-- "Cut off your hand . . . pluck out your eye"**

**-- But we only have two hands, two feet, two eyes . . . and so many sins. We need a Savior who bore the length, depth and breadth of sin and its consequences.**

**-- And we have One, in Jesus.**





**END SLIDE (Blank)**