

Hope Church April 19, 2026

1 John 5:14-21

The problem beneath the problem – why sin matters.

Last week we started this series: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS. Not surface-level stuff. Real questions **people wrestle with**. Questions people don't always say out loud.

Here's today's question. A real uncomfortable conversation starter:

Is all sin the same?

Have you ever wrestled with that?

- ⇒ Sin is doing what we know we shouldn't.
- ⇒ It's not doing what we know we should.
- ⇒ Sometimes we fall into it. We didn't see it coming.
- ⇒ Other times, we walk straight into it. We know exactly what we're doing. And we still do it.
- ⇒ Some sin leaves deep scars.
- ⇒ Other sin feels small and insignificant.

IT DOESN'T FEEL THAT ALL SIN IS THE SAME.

- **Losing your temper** vs genocide?
- A small lie to look better in front of others vs **stealing thousands** of dollars?
- **Ignoring someone** in need – and actively hurting someone?

These don't feel EQUAL. It doesn't feel that it **carries the same weight**. It doesn't have the same impact. And we *shouldn't pretend* they do.

- SOME SIN IS HEAVY. You can see and feel the impact. Broken trust. *Wounded people*. **Fractured lives**.
- Other sin feels less heavy. But the danger is: it still does something.
 - ⇒ It hardens your heart.
 - ⇒ It **dulls your sensitivity**.
 - ⇒ It *slowly pulls you away from God*.

Sin isn't just doing something wrong. It's a direction. It's what happens when I start **drifting away from God** and try to BUILD LIFE ON MY OWN TERMS. It pushes against how life was designed. It breaks trust. It wounds people. It creates distance between us and the God who made us. At the core, sin is this:

living like I'm in charge and God isn't.

Is All Sin the Same? The Bible gives a more honest answer than we expect.

- Not all sin has the same impact.
- But all sin shares the same root – living like I'm in charge. My wants and my needs and my desires.
- And we're all guilty.

That's why Paul says in Romans:

- **Romans 3:23 NLT:** For everyone has sinned; we all FALL SHORT of God's glorious standard.
- **Romans 6:23 NLT:** For the wages of sin is death.

DIFFERENT SIN may look different on the surface. But it all **comes from the same place**. And it all *leads in the same direction*. If left unchecked. Away from God. To death.

- If I'm honest today. My sin won't make the front-page news.
- But it's there. I struggle. It hurts.
- It's trying to push me away from God.

TIM KELLER said it like this:

Your sins always appear smaller to you than they really are.

If you've been around church for a while, there are TWO SHIFTS that **happen quietly**:

- We start **downplaying sin**. We want to focus on grace. We don't want to offend anyone.

We don't want to pile more guilt on broken messy people. It's not that bad.

- We forget Jesus didn't come just to forgive us. **He came to change us**. To transform us.
- Because Jesus doesn't stop at behavior. He goes AFTER OUR HEARTS. Our attitudes.

⇒ When Jesus talked about money, it's not just about being generous. **It's about what I'm trusting**. Because money has a way of quietly taking God's place.

⇒ When He talked about relationships. He doesn't just deal with my actions. **He goes after my desires**. Faithfulness isn't just what I do. IT'S WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE OF ME.

⇒ When it comes to things like Sabbath or spiritual habits. Jesus made it clear faith isn't about checking boxes. **It's about real obedience that moves me toward people**.

- As believers we need to take sin seriously. Not to shame people.
- We take sin seriously because **we need to be honest about what's broken**. How deeply we need Jesus!
- Because the moment we minimize sin. We also **minimize what Jesus came to do**.
- THE CROSS HOLDS TWO TRUTHS at the same time:
 - ⇒ Your SIN is deeper than you realize.
 - ⇒ You are MORE LOVED than you **ever imagined**.

Because if sin is small, then grace becomes small.

But if sin runs deep, then grace goes deeper.

If you have your Bible here today or use the Bible app on your phone, we're going to be in **1**

JOHN 5 today.

- John is writing to real churches in Ephesus dealing with **real confusion**.
- People were saying:
 - ⇒ Jesus isn't really who He said He was.
 - ⇒ Sin isn't that big of a deal.
- And it left people unsure – where do I stand with God? What does God expect from me?
- John writes to them to give them clarity.
- And he keeps coming back to TWO WORDS:

life / ζωή and death / θάνατος.

⇒ Not physical life and death.

⇒ Eternal life and death.

Verses 14-15:

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

- We can come to God with confidence. Not guessing if He hears us. Not hoping we said the right words.
- **We know that he hears us.**
- But PRAYER isn't about getting God to do what we want.
- It's about our **hearts lining up with His**. It's less about CONTROL and more about TRANSFORMATION.

Verses 16-17:

If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

- If someone in your church is getting pulled into sin. Don't look the other way. Don't just talk about it.
- STEP IN. Go deeper. **Get praying**.
- John gives us the promise that God **will responds** and He **will restore** them.
- Then he says something that should make every one of us stop in our tracks:
 - ⇒ There is SIN that leads to death.
 - ⇒ And there is SIN that **does not lead to death**.
- What John is trying to say:
 - ⇒ Two people can struggle with the same sin.
 - ⇒ One is **moving toward Jesus** with it.
 - ⇒ The other is **moving away from Him** with it.
 - ⇒ SAME STRUGGLE.
 - ⇒ Completely different direction.

Sin that leads to death – a warning we can't ignore.

- This is about a life that slowly drifts into rebellion. This **doesn't happen overnight**.
 - ⇒ It starts with – I'm struggling with this.

⇒ Then it becomes – This is just who I am.

⇒ And eventually it becomes – No one gets to question this.

- At some point, **it's no longer a struggle**. It's a HEART that's pushing Jesus away.

Not WRESTLING. Not DOUBTING. It's a decision.

God, you don't get to lead my life.

- This isn't someone fighting sin. This **IS** someone making peace with their sin.

⇒ **Building their lives** around it.

⇒ Defining themselves by it.

⇒ **Walking away from Jesus** because of it.

- That is what John is warning about:

The greatest danger isn't the sin you're fighting. It's the sin you stop fighting.

- The scary part is. You can sit in church. You **can sing the songs**. You can *show up every week*. And still be slowly building a life where JESUS **doesn't get access to everything**.

- This shows up in:
 - ⇒ The BITTERNESS you refuse to let go.
 - ⇒ A RELATIONSHIP you **won't surrender**.
 - ⇒ A HABIT you've stopped resisting.
 - ⇒ A PART OF YOUR LIFE where you've said: **Jesus, you can have everything except this.**
- Sin that leads to death is when we stop fighting. When CONVICTION GOES QUIET.
And it doesn't bother us anymore.
- It's not just that we sin. It's that **we settle into it**.
- We stop bringing it into the light. We stop turning back to God.
- And over time, it's not a struggle anymore.
- If you're sitting here wondering if you have crossed that line? The fact that you are asking that question matters.
- Because a **hard heart doesn't ask that**.
- The fact that it *still bothers you*. The fact that you *still feel the pull back to God*.
- **That's not death. That's life.**

Sin that does NOT lead to death — live in real hope.

- This is a life that is marked by repentance. Not PERFECTION. **Repentance**.
- John isn't saying we'll never stumble or never struggle or never mess up again. There may still be **habits we wish we can get rid of**.
- But followers of Jesus NEVER GET COMFORTABLE IN THEIR SIN.
 - ⇒ We don't excuse it.
 - ⇒ We don't **rename it**.
 - ⇒ We don't build our identity around it.
 - ⇒ We bring **it into the light**.
 - ⇒ We own it before God and we're **real about it with others**.
- Even if **progress feels slow** there's a real desire to change – I just don't want to keep on struggling with this anymore.
- And that matters more than you think. Because the ISSUE isn't if you sin. **It's what you do when you sin**.
 - ⇒ Do you run from God or **run to Him**?
 - ⇒ Do you hide it or **bring it into the light**?
 - ⇒ Do you get comfortable or do you **stay honest**?
- That tension you feel? That's not failure. That's a **sign of life**.

- Some of you are tired **struggling with the same sin**. Tired of bringing the *same thing to God*. Tired of wondering if anything will ever change.
- And here's the **good news: sin does not get the final word**.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1 NIV

- Not less CONDEMNATION. Not delayed CONDEMNATION. **NO CONDEMNATION**.
- No CONDEMNATION over your identity. Not CONDEMNATION over your future.
 - ⇒ GRACE IS BIGGER than the **sin you keep fighting**.
 - ⇒ GRACE IS BIGGER than the **guilt that keeps replaying**.
 - ⇒ GRACE IS BIGGER than the **voice that says you're not good enough**.
- You don't have to live in the fear that you're one step away from being exposed.
- **Your sin has already been dealt with**.
- You stand clean. Not because you got it right.
- **But because Jesus made it right**.
- Jesus didn't come for *your best moments*. He came for all of it.

- When you bring your sin to Him. **Honestly** and **repeatedly** and **even imperfectly**.

You will not be rejected.

You're forgiven. Fully. Completely.

There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us.

Richard Sibbes

- Even if it feels like two steps forward. One step back.
- Your story is not moving toward death. **It's moving toward life**.
- And this is where **John invites the church** to step in.
 - ⇒ We don't stand back and judge others. **We step closer. We pray.**
 - ⇒ Not because people have it together. But because *God meets them right in the middle of their struggles*.
 - ⇒ When someone is still fighting. Even if it's MESSY. **We don't give up** on them.
Because God hasn't.
 - ⇒ We go to God with CONFIDENCE.
 - ⇒ Trusting that **He restores**.
 - ⇒ Trusting that **He forgives**.

⇒ Trusting that **He keeps carrying people forward** even when they feel stuck.

Verses 18-21:

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

- John brings it back to our identity:

If you belong to God, your life is moving in a new direction.

- Not perfect. **But not stuck**. We live in the promise that *sin isn't running the show anymore*.
- And here's the promise: you're not holding yourself together. **God is holding you**.
- Then John zooms out. There are TWO FORCES SHAPING THIS WORLD:
 - ⇒ one pulling us **toward God**.
 - ⇒ one pushing us **away from God**.

- Whether you realize it or not, you are being shaped by one of them.

- **This is why Jesus matters.** He's not just showing a way.

⇒ He is the WAY.

⇒ He is the TRUTH.

⇒ He is the LIFE.

- And John ends with this: *keep yourselves from idols*.
- He reminds us to watch our hearts.
- Need to pay attention to what is **quietly replacing God in our lives**.
- Not EVERYTHING that looks good is true. Not EVERYTHING that **feels right leads to life**.

All sin doesn't do the same damage. But all sin comes from the same place.

And it all pulls in one of two directions.

Toward life or toward death.

The real question is not if you have sinned. The real question is what you are doing with it when you do.

No sin is small. But no one who turns back is out of God's reach.

BLESSING

As you go this week, don't ignore what's going on underneath the surface.

Don't downplay sin. Don't hide it. Bring it into the light.

Keep fighting the sin you're tempted to make peace with.

Don't let it settle in. Don't let it define you.

May you remember: your sin is real, but it is not final.

Because Jesus has already stepped in. Already paid the cost. Already made a way.

So may you live this week without condemnation and without pretending.

Honest about your struggle. Confident in His grace.

And as you go May your life keep moving in one direction.

Not away from God, but toward Him.

Toward life.

Toward freedom.

Toward Jesus.

AMEN