**Life in 6 Words – Week 3 – “SINS”**

*“Sins cannot be removed by good deeds.”*

Illustration: Swimming, panic attack.

Drowning must be a terrible feeling. Overwhelmed. Claustrophobic. Out of breath. Out of energy and strength. It’s a terrible experience. A terrible feeling.

That’s how we should feel about our sin. We can’t escape from sin. This is the deep water, overwhelming water, inescapable depths, that God allows us to though before we know Christ.

Last week we talked about how “Our sins separate us from God.” But it gets worse. There is no amount of deeds we can do, that can help us escape from the ultimate deep pool, “sin”.

**SINS CANNOT BE REMOVED BY GOOD DEEDS**

*Ephesians 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

Because we are sinful by nature, we are naturally self-centered. And so it is only natural, in our sinful tendency, that we think that we must play a role in our own salvation. Surely there must be something we have to *do* to fix *our* sin problem. But we are wrong.

There is nothing we can do to rid ourselves of our sins. There is nothing we

can do to fix our own sin problem. We are too broken to fix ourselves, and there is no amount of “good things” that we can do to right what has been wronged.

So, the *bad* news is that we are sinners separated from God. But even worse news, there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. And we are doomed. Unless we are rescued by someone who is able and willing!

There is not a single person in heaven, or going to heaven, that can boast about how they got there because of their good deeds. Only those who trusted in Christ alone are there and will be there. And the boasting will be in Christ alone.

“Sins cannot be removed by good deeds.” But WHY?

1. **Because we could never be good enough to enter God’s presence.**

*Revelation 21:27, “Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”*

It’s impossible to long jump to Robben Island. It’s impossible to pole vault to the top of Table Mountain. We will always fall short, no matter how hard we tried.

As Christians we want to do good deeds by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. But those good deeds can never save us. We do it to glorify God. We do it to witness to others around us. But those good deeds flow from an existing relationship with God.

But we can’t do good deeds to form a relationship with God.

Illustration: White icing on a burnt cake. The burnt cake represents our lives without Christ – damaged and devastated by sin. Appling white icing on the cake is like trying to remove or cover our sins with good deeds. It might seem impressive, but it does not solve the problem underneath...it produces no meaningful change at all.

Sins cannot be removed by good deeds because we could never be good enough.

1. **Because the law is a mirror, not a ladder.**

Illustration: Have you ever fallen off a ladder? We all fall off the ladder of the law.

*Romans 3:10, “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our*

*sin.”*

Somebody said it’s like waking up in the morning, looking into a mirror, seeing the mess called. Unshaven, unbrushed, eyes, teeth. But you don’t take the mirror to wash your face with the mirror, comb your hair with the mirror, try shaving with the mirror, etc. It doesn’t work! The mirror shows us the mess, but the mirror can’t fix the mess.

The law is like a mirror. It exposes how messed up we are, but we are saved, cleaned up, transformed by God’s grace. The law was never meant to save anyone.

In Matthew 19:16-26. Jesus wasn’t saying to the young rich ruler that he could obtain salvation by a good deed. But Jesus showed him his true need –forgiveness of sin. Jesus “took a mirror” to reveal the rich young ruler’s heart. This young man implied that he was able to meet the perfect standard of God’s Law. None of us, including him, are able to do that. Jesus showed him his sins, and his need for a Savior. Before we can respond appropriately to God’s call to salvation, we must realize why and how we

can be saved.

Illustration: Some dentists use a dye that “exposes” where your teeth have not been brushed and flossed. They use that dye on your teeth and you look into the mirror, and you see how unclean your teeth are. “The dye doesn’t lie, you didn’t brush your teeth. The law does not lie. It shows us our faults.

Jesus made it really clear in Matthew 5, the law’s purpose:

“You’ve heard it said, but I say unto you…” Don’t commit adultery…but if you’ve ever lusted after a woman, you’ve committed adultery with her already in your mind. Don’t commit murder…but if you’ve ever been angry with someone you’ve murdered them in your mind. Don’t just love your friends…love your enemies.

*Matthew 5:48* – *“Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*

The Law, reflects the character, perfection, and righteousness of a holy God.

The law is a mirror, not a ladder. You don’t get to heaven through the law.

1. **Even our good deeds come from selfish motives.**

God is not just going to judge us for our actions. God will judge us for everything! According to Matthew 5:27-28, he will judge our thoughts!

According to 1 Corinthians 4:5, he will judge our motives! According to Matthew 12:36-37, he will judge our words! According to Revelation 20:11-15, he will judge our actions!

*That is why Isaiah 64:6 says, “…all our righteous acts are like filthy rags…”*

Isaiah clearly states how God sees our attempts to be righteous on our own as “filthy rags.” The word filthy is a translation of the Hebrew word iddah, which literally means “the bodily fluids from a woman’s menstrual cycle.” The word rags is a translation of *begged*, meaning “a rag or garment.”

God considers our “righteous acts” as repugnant as a soiled feminine

hygiene product. (source: gotquestions.org)

When it comes to believing, receiving, and sharing the Good News of Jesus, the idea that “sins cannot be removed by good deeds” sets Christianity apart from all other religions. Most religions agree that there is a problem with humanity that needs to be fixed, the difference is in how to fix it:

Some religions say we fix it by the Laws and the Covenants, or by the way of works, the way of knowledge, the way of devotion. Some say, by the four noble truths, of the five pillars of faith. Many religions believe there is a ladder into heaven, or paradise or nirvana.

But Christians don’t believe in a ladder. We believe in a cross. The cross of

Jesus Christ.

Our solution to sin is not to try, but to trust. Truly trusting Jesus to save us starts with giving up on trying to save ourselves and taking Him at His Word.

If you are an unbeliever, put your faith in Christ alone for salvation today.

If you are a believer, the same faith that saves you also sanctifies you. Out

of the sanctification, good deeds will come.

Refuse to be legalistic. Legalism is when we take the grace that God offers for FREE, and add a FEE. Legalism and self-righteousness are sins themselves that are very displeasing to God. The only way to please the Lord and produce good works is by relying on the presence of Christ in our lives.

Good works flow out of faith. Ephesians 2:8-10:

*““For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.* *For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*.”

Many good works God has created you for.

* Present the GOSPEL
* Invitation/Response Time