



Gospel Threads

Thread 2: The Sinfulness of Man

Key Question: *How can we weave truths about man's sinfulness, guilt, and need for a Savior into our everyday conversations?*

Review: Why "Gospel Threads?"

- **God's Word commands us to make disciples.**
 - Disciples Receive & Believe the Gospel
 - Disciples Display the Gospel through Service and Actions
 - Disciples Proclaim the Gospel with our Words
- **Evangelism is not an event but a way of life**, an overflow of our own joy and walk with Christ.
- **Overcoming Obstacles:** How can we overcome obstacles to evangelism consistently and habitually?
- **Active and Passive Fields** - There are many "fields" of evangelism in which we can proclaim the gospel. They can be grouped into two categories:
 - **Active Spheres:** We intentionally alter our life to be around non-believers.
 - **Passive Spheres:** We engage with non-believers in everyday settings.
- **The Key:** *We need to develop habits of intentionality in our speech and actions that open pathways to share the gospel.*
- **The Method: Weaving Gospel Threads**
 - **The Threads:** Gospel themes.
 - **The Fabric:** Our everyday lives.
 - **The Needle:** Our obedience to display and declare.
 - **The Process:** Keep weaving threads until a door opens to take the next step.
 - **The Goal:** Share the gospel as an overflow of your already-established connection and friendship.

Gospel Thread #2 - The Sinfulness of Man¹

- **Why Focus on the Sinfulness of Man?**

- The Bible presents the sinfulness of man as *the* problem with the world and the root of every other problem we experience.
 - **Genesis 2:17** *...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*
- Sin is “missing the mark” of God’s righteousness, a transgression of his commands that proceeds from a rebellious heart.
- The Holy Spirit always convicts us of sin when working repentance, and without repentance there is no salvation.
 - **2 Corinthians 7:10** *For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret...*

- **Created in God’s Image**

- We are created for intimate communion with God as we share in his likeness and serve in obedience for his purpose.
 - **Genesis 1:27** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*
 - **1 Corinthians 10:31** *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*
- We are created to be recipients and conduits of God’s joy and blessing.
 - **Genesis 12:1-3** *Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*
- We are created to have dominion over the earth, to “work and keep it.”
 - **Psalms 8:3-6** *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.*
- We are created for eternal life, dwelling in God’s presence forever.
 - **Genesis 17:8** *And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.*
 - **Revelation 21:3** *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”*

¹ Lesson material for this thread adapted from David Platt’s “Gospel Threads”. See more at: <https://radical.net/book/gospel-threads-2/>

- **Corrupted by Sin**

- Because of the fall, we all share in Adam's sin and guilt, and inherit a sin nature.
 - **1 Corinthians 15:21-22** *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*
 - **Romans 5:12-14** *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*
- Because of our inherited sinfulness, we are all corrupt in thought and desire, as well as in every action that proceeds from our sinful nature.
 - **Ephesians 2:1-3** *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*
 - **Matthew 15:19** *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*
- Sin destroys our communion with God and distorts his image in us.
 - **Genesis 3:8** *And 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.*
 - **Genesis 3:24** *He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*
- Sin brings us under God's wrath and curse.
 - **Romans 2:6, 8** *He will render to each one according to his works: ...for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*
- Sin makes us liable to all the miseries of this life.
 - **Genesis 3:16-19** *I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing...Your desire shall be contrary to your husband...in pain you shall eat of [the ground] all the days of your life...By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*
- Sin sentences us to eternal death apart from God, which is hell.
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:9** *They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...*
- Question: How can we speak truthfully yet humbly about sin in regular day-to-day conversations? What mistakes can we avoid?

- **Revealing Sin**

- Most people more often feel the *effects* of sin – pain, fear, shame, and guilt (as a feeling) – than they feel the horror of their own sinful condition.
- We are trained by the world to look *outward* for the cause of our suffering and pain, but Scripture forces us to look *inward*.
- We want to help people understand that whatever effects of sin they have suffered or even continue to suffer, their true need is to have their sin forgiven and cleansed. We want to guide people to look inward to see their need.
- God gave his Law expressly for this purpose. His Law convicts us of our sinfulness and shows us our need for a Savior.
 - **Galatians 3:19-22** *Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. 20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. 21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*
 - **1 Timothy 1:8-11** *Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.*
- The Law is summarized in the Ten Commandments, and captured by the Two Great Commandments.
 - **Matthew 22:35-40** *And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*
- The Law doesn't ask for our best attempt – it demands perfection.
 - **Deuteronomy 27:26** *Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.*
 - **James 2:10-11** *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.*
- Therefore, whether we eschew the Law in self-indulgence or abuse the Law in self-righteousness, we are condemned.

- **Romans 3:20** *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*
- **Galatians 3:10** *For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."*
- The Law's penalty for sin is death.
 - **Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death...*
 - **Ezekiel 18:4** *The soul who sins shall die.*

Weaving the Thread of Man's Sinfulness

- In conversations, look for the three common fruits of sin in people's lives and try to ask questions to encourage an inward look.
 - **Shame** - After Adam and Eve sinned, they felt a sense of their shame, and tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. Often people will try to do good in one area of their lives to cover shame in other areas.
 - **Guilt** - People are guilty in their sin, even if they don't understand it or know to acknowledge it. All people try to assuage their guilt by (1) denying that there's right or wrong, (2) convincing themselves that a standard is unrealistic, or (3) anesthetizing consciences with chemicals or amusement.
 - **Fear** - Adam and Eve found themselves hiding from God after they sinned. Sometimes people will try to do things to appease the god of their imagination, or will live in fear of the fruit of sin without realizing its source (loneliness, emptiness, pain, disease, etc.)
- Positively, speak respectfully to and about all people as individuals created in the image of God, and look intentionally for opportunities to encourage others with the grace of God.
- **Talking about our rebellion...**
 - Acknowledge the reality of sin in and around you.
 - Acknowledge the root of sin in and around you.
 - Speak honestly about our propensity to sin.
 - Talk about sin in all its forms.
 - Talk about sin in light of its force.
- **Talking about our separation...**
 - Speak humbly about the seriousness of sin.
 - Let the effects of sin inform the way you talk about salvation...
 - In conversations about guilt, talk about forgiveness in Christ.
 - In conversations about shame, talk about honor in Christ.
 - In conversations about fear, talk about freedom in Christ.
- **Constantly point to our dependence on and desperation for God.**

Case Studies for Consideration

- **Stuck in a Long Line.** You're at a store and a long line has formed at the only open register. The harrowing circumstances have sparked camaraderie among the shoppers, and the people around you are plenty willing to converse (and complain!). The ire of the impatient shoppers quickly turns to the slow checkout clerks.
 - **Discussion Question 1:** What are some ways you could gracefully respond to sarcasm or complaints that turn the conversation towards our sin and need for mercy and forgiveness? How might you speak and act to encourage the overwhelmed cashier that relates to human sinfulness and our need for God's grace?
- **Self-Righteous Acquaintance.** You're at a social gathering and end up in conversation with someone who has mentioned giving to charity, his commitment to being a good father, and his disdain for people who "just don't care about doing the right thing." He seems satisfied with his own track record. At one point he turns to you and says, "I figure if you try to treat people right and live a decent life, that's all anyone can really ask."
 - **Question:** How might you engage his moral seriousness as a genuine bridge point rather than an obstacle – affirming what's right in his instincts while raising the question of whether a "decent life" is actually enough? How might you introduce the Law's demand for perfection not as an attack but as a reframe that opens a door to grace?
- **Just a Standard News Cycle. Scene:** Some of your coworkers are talking about a tragic story in the news. Some are saddened or angry and demand action, while others are indifferent and assert that's just the way the world is. One of them lobs you a slow pitch over home plate by asking what you think.
 - **Question:** Assuming that the tragic situation involves on person's sin against another, how can you hold forth God's wrath against sin and his promise to avenge it in a way that drives the conversation forward towards God's solution to sin in Christ? In the case of an impersonal tragedy (natural disaster, etc.), how can you redirect people's concern away from the symptom and to the sickness of sin itself without downplaying the suffering?
- **Grieving Neighbor.** You're at a neighborhood gathering a short while after a longtime resident on your street suddenly passed away. In a quiet moment, one of your neighbors that you've chatted with but don't know deeply says to you, "This death has really shaken me up. I don't know what I believe, but I sure hope he's somewhere better. I guess I hope we all end up okay in the end." She looks at you and adds, "Have you ever thought about what happens after you die?"
 - **Question:** How might you respond to her direct question with both honesty and gentleness? What aspects of sin and salvation could you share personally, in a way that's inviting rather than alienating?

Lesson Summary

- We are all made in the image of God and corrupted by sin - each of us in both dignified and depraved.
- Without an understanding of the depth and consequence of our sin, the gospel will seem optional at best and distasteful at worst.
- God's Law is the best tool for showing us our sin, and we ought not be afraid of using it in evangelism to show a person their sinful condition and need for Christ.
- Remember that we were once dead in our trespasses just like the lost we're witnessing to - let that inspire you to humility and passion for seeing them saved by God's grace just like you were.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 2:4-7