

We Believe
We Believe that Sin Separates Us from God
Ephesians 2:1-3; Genesis 11:1-9

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September 21, 2008

Text: (Ephesians 2:1-3) ¹ And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

(Genesis 11:1-9) ¹ Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. ² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. ³ Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake *them* thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. ⁴ And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶ And the LORD said, "Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. ⁷ Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Introduction: We are continuing our series this morning on our foundational beliefs. We have completed our study of the Trinity and then the Bible. Now, we turn our attention to other fundamental beliefs. No statement of faith is complete with a definition of sin and its consequences.

A Definition for Sin:

How do you define sin? What is sin? Some would define by words from the Bible. We are most familiar with the idea of "missing the mark." Indeed, this is a good definition. Maybe we think of a particular Bible verse, like, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30) Indeed, a gain, a good definition. Maybe you think in terms of specific actions like those "do's and don'ts of the Ten Commandments." Then there are those famous quotations, like that reportedly from the mother of John Wesley.

"Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

Susanna Wesley (Letter, June 8, 1725)

I want to suggest a definition of sin today for the purpose of clarity that comes straight from Genesis 11.

Sin is anything with an “I” in the middle!

This “play” on the word sin communicates that sin is carried out when we put our will ahead of God’s will. In the story of Babel in Genesis 11, we see that...

- Pride is at the heart of the building project. Notice the “let us” in verses 3 and 4.
- They sought their security apart from God. At first glance you might think that the people of Babel had noble intentions to get to God, but verse 4 reveals the real intentions, “to make a name for {themselves.}”
- They rejected God’s will for their lives. God’s clear, revealed will for the people of Babel was to scatter and have dominion over the world. The plan of the people of Babel was to stay together.

Anytime that we put “I” in the middle, it will always result in sin.

The Destruction that Sin Brings:

Sin separates us from God both now and forever.

That’s the whole point of this sermon. Sin separates us from God. The Prophet Isaiah made this clear as recorded in Isaiah 59:2, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God...”

The story of Babel is such a good illustration of this. The people tried to make their way to God, but their sin caused them to be even farther away from God.

It is important that we recognize that sin separates us from God both now and forever.

Now in that our sin causes us to feel away from God. Forever in that the sum total of our unforgiven sin is an eternity apart from God.

That is the state of every single one of us apart from God, but the story of Babel teaches us one other lesson.

The Divine Solution:

God always has a plan to accomplish His purposes.

Follow the story. God wanted the people of Babel to scatter and fill the earth. They wanted to stay to make a name for themselves. God scattered them.

God always has a plan. God has a plan to deal with the sins of the world. That plan was Jesus coming to live among us so that He might pay the penalty for sin on the cross.

Our predicament and God’s plan can be illustrated by a picture. Look at the screen. (Picture of Chasm between People and God) People try to hurdle this chasm by many things: Church, Good Works, Trying

harder to be good. Some try other religions that are based on doing something. All of these attempts fall short.

But here is what God did. (Show slide with cross) He “bridged” the gap by the cross so that we might walk across. Any attempt to bridge the gap without the cross will leave us permanently and eternally separated from God.