

I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok: Part 5, The Renewal of the Heart

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Hebrews 4, continuing a series of messages that this is actually the fifth in the series that we've titled, the title of each message in the series has been "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok." That's the biblical picture of man after the fall. "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok" and today the subtitle is "The Renewal of the Heart." The renewal of the heart. "I'm Not Ok; You're Not Ok: The Renewal of the Heart." This series of messages have been looking at the heart and we looked at the second message in the series and we looked at the design of the heart, that our heart has been designed by God to be like his heart. We think like God thinks. We want and have desires, God has desires. We choose, God chooses. He's made our hearts to reflect him. That was the design of the heart, then we looked at the corruption of the heart, how sin has corrupted the beauty of God's design. Then last time, two weeks ago, we looked at the redemption of the heart and how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took upon himself full humanity and lived out a perfect human life, including a heart fully prepared, perfectly prepared for God. He thought God's thoughts after him. He desired the things that God desired at every moment of every day of his life, and he always chose the will of God.

So today the renewal of the heart. The emphasis on the heart in the Scripture is clear. I mentioned that the words, the Hebrew and Greek words translated "heart" in your Old Testament and your New Testament occur 1,000 times, the word "heart," the Hebrew and Greek words for that. And it's important because one of the most perplexing questions in life that thinking people have always wrestled with is why do we do the things we do? Why are we compelled to do things that are destructive to us? Even unbelievers have wrestled with this throughout the centuries and there are a number of answers that they have posited. You know, why does the alcoholic who is destroying his family continue to drink? Why does the person who is addicted to pornography continue to destroy themselves through that? Why does a chronic worrier worry? Why does a person with debilitating fear continue to be afraid? The world has various answers it posits: it's biology; it's genetics, you are what you are because of your genetic wiring. That's what the world says, or you are what you are because of the chemical imbalances in your brain. You are what you are because you have a disease. Alcoholism is seen by many, and has been seen by many for a long time to be a disease that can never be changed, you just learn how to cope with. And we appreciate the efforts that are being made to help people to cope with that and we should not look down upon those things except to say that a

Christian has a much better answer than Alcoholics Anonymous offers. Alcoholics Anonymous, you know, "Hi, my name is Jim and I am an alcoholic," that's how you introduce yourself every time. The Christian no longer self-identifies by his sin he struggles with. The Christian has been made new. The Christian has a new heart and so it's not appropriate for us to see ourselves that way anymore. For a Christian who has been born again, your identity is in Christ. You may still struggle with temptation to drink alcohol, you may still struggle with temptation to sexual sin, but if you've been born again, you don't identify yourself as an alcoholic Christian.

This is something really important today with this whole Revoice Conference you may have heard about where this gathering of professed Christians to talk about homosexuality in such a way that says that you can be a Christian and call yourself a gay Christian. And listen very clearly: you can be a Christian and struggle with same-sex attraction, that is absolutely true, you can be a Christian and struggle with any temptation to sin, but if you're a Christian you should not identify yourself as a Christian by your sin. It's completely unbiblical to say, "I'm a gay Christian because I have same-sex attractions, or I am a queer Christian." This is what they were talking about and trying to be comfortable with that.

Now it's true the church has not always responded as it should with the kind of compassion that it should in really helping people who were struggling with those things, but that doesn't mean that we should identify ourselves by our sins. This is completely unbiblical. Paul was not continuing, did not continue to be known as Saul the persecutor throughout his life. "Well, here's Saul the persecutor. I'm tempted to persecute, so call me Saul the persecutor." No, he became Paul the apostle. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, talking about a list of sins including homosexuality, adultery, homosexuality, gluttony, all these things, and Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "For such were some of you," but you were washed, you were sanctified so you're no longer identified by what you were and you may still have struggles and battles with that sin that you were delivered from but you're not to identify yourself in accordance with that sin. You are now in Christ. You now have the resources, a new heart, and the ability to walk in holiness.

So we come to a passage today which reminds us of the heart change that has happened and that needs to continue to change, and we understand that for those who have experienced life-dominating sin, and all of us have in some ways experienced sins that are incredibly powerful and you are probably struggling with one sin. If I asked you your besetting sin, you could probably identify one thing or maybe two that you struggle with more than others but you're not to define yourself by that sin. You're to become increasingly free through the power of grace.

But it's true in fairness to helping us understand the unbelieving culture, you know for the alcoholic, it does feel like it's a disease because it feels like their determination decision to drink is involuntary. It feels like that. It feels like they can't help it. It feels like the person dealing with sometimes sexual sin that is described as addiction by the world, feels like an addiction that you can't let go of and the Christian, even, can feel that sense of compulsion but the Christian has a new power in his life to be free, but it doesn't

change the fact that you can still feel at times the compelling power of sin tugging at your heart, but the balance is that if you're truly born again, you're no longer a slave. You've been set free and you have the power and the opportunity to learn to walk in freedom, but listen carefully, walking in freedom is normally an arduous task. It's not easy. It's not easy to walk in holiness and we need to understand that and we need to have compassion for one another as we help one another walk in victory.

Hebrews 4:11-16 shows us this, the reality of the difficulty that it is to walk in holiness and we're going to see in this passage that we continue, the focus continues to be on the heart. God looks at the heart. Hebrews 4:11-16,

11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that now that the entrance of your word might bring light, that you might cause your word to do its work in us that we just read about, that it might be living and active in the hearts of each person here, that it might pierce to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, that it might discern the thoughts and intentions of our heart, that it might lead us to Christ. We pray this in his name. Amen.

Now we've mentioned that the heart is the word, mentioned that it's 1,000 times in the Old and New Testament between the Hebrew and the Greek words that are used for "heart," but it's a word which essentially refers to the inner man and it is used in Scripture, you have words that are used virtually interchangeably. There is some sense in which it's not perfect overlap but it's very close. Heart = soul = spirit = inner man, even = mind. A number of times in the New Testament and Old Testament where the New American Standard translates the word "heart, mind" because as we've seen, the heart is made up of the thinking of man as well. There are other things too but the thinking, and it translates best into our language sometimes to use the word "mind." Heart = soul = spirit = mind = the inner man.

So the heart, we've said the heart is where we think. There are three things: the heart thinks; the heart feels; and the heart chooses. This is what we see from Scripture, that the

heart is where our thinking happens. Jesus read the thoughts of their hearts. The heart is where we feel. Our emotions flow from our hearts. The heart is where we choose, the intentions of our hearts. We intend, we purpose, we choose, we decide. So you can say that thinks, feels and chooses you might label cognition, that's thinking; feeling is affection, to want, to desire; choosing is volition, volition, the will, the decision, to be committed. So these three things happen in the heart.

Now, what we want to see is that this passage is basically saying that for us to continue to walk and follow Christ and to be faithful to him and to be true in entering into his rest, the fullness of salvation, what we have to do is continually experience heart surgery. That's essentially what Hebrews 4:12 is saying, that we need the word of God on a regular basis to be doing surgery in our hearts. That's the word picture. "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The word of God has this power to go into our hearts and to cut and to lay open in such a way with such precision that it discerns, it understands, it provides us with understanding of why we are doing what we do and it leads us out of that to a sense of brokenness and to run to Christ. It's not accidental that we find these last three verses of that chapter then talking about going to your high priest.

Now we're going to consider this under two main points this morning but with one preliminary observation. So there are three points in a way, there is one preliminary observation and two points. The preliminary observation is the consistency of the biblical witness. The whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation says that man's problem is not his environment, it's not his biology, his problem is his heart. This is the witness of the entire Bible. Genesis 6:5, the first time the word "heart" occurs after the fall, after the degradation that led to the flood before the flood actually happens, God looks upon man in Genesis 6:5 and he saw man that he had made, that the intentions of his heart were only evil continually. The first time the word "heart" occurs, the intentions of his heart were only evil; the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually. The problem is the heart.

Then what you see as you look at the flow of Scripture, the whole Bible is saying it's all about the heart. Even as the Old Testament, as God progressively reveals himself to us in the Scriptures, he's showing us the reality of what our problem is from Genesis and the Bible, progressive revelation means it builds upon itself. God is teaching us basic things and then he's adding more complex things, then he's adding more complex things until finally the fullness of what he's trying to say comes clear in the New Testament. The analogy that you might use is someone learning mathematics. You have to learn $2 + 2$ before you learn trigonometry. Sine and cosine don't make any sense until you can first do $2 + 2$ and you've got to do 3×3 and you've got to do decimals and you've got to do fractions and you've got to do algebra and geometry and finally you're ready for trigonometry. Then if you're really a brave soul, you can go on to calculus but you don't start with that. You have to have basics first.

Well, God is the perfect teacher and he, as John Calvin said, in his word he prattles with us. He baby-talks with us. In the same way you teach a little child the language, you baby-talk with them, you show them and you allow them to build upon thing after thing until finally they're able to fully understand and comprehend language, well, God does that in his word and one of the ways he does that is through shadows in the Old Testament, symbols that become, that represent the fullness that is in Christ and one of the first symbols that you have in Genesis as God is explaining what a relationship with him looks like, because essentially if you want an outline of Genesis, just real quickly, the first 11 chapters you've got creation and you've got fall and you've got how bad the fall was. That's essentially, I just gave you the outline of Genesis 1-11. Genesis 4, right after the fall, Cain kills his brother. Look how bad sin is. Genesis 6, it's so bad God has to destroy the whole world with a flood. That's how bad sin is. After he destroys the whole world with a flood, well maybe now everything is going to be okay. In Genesis 9, Noah comes off the boat and he automatically, he immediately has some problems. Then in Genesis 11, God has to come down again because they're already in danger of destroying the world again in themselves. The Tower of Babel has to happen.

How wicked man is, that's the point of Genesis 1-11, how bad the heart is. The only hope for man to come back to God, God must come down. We can't go up. Genesis 11, we're trying to go up. No, we can't go up. There's no way you can go to God. God must come down and he comes down and he meets with Abram and he turns his name into Abraham and he makes a covenant with him, and he teaches us in very basic ways what salvation is going to be. He teaches us in Genesis 15 that salvation is going to be by faith. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. He teaches us that salvation is going to be in Genesis 22 by God sending his Son. Remember the offering of Isaac was a picture. Abraham didn't really have to offer his son. He offered, he was willing to but, no, God didn't let him offer his son. God said, "I'm going to give my Son for you. That's how you come into relationship with me." So that's a picture.

Genesis 17 is the covenant of circumcision. Here in the middle of this as God's unpacking for us, baby-talking with us, Genesis 17, the covenant of circumcision. You read that passage and this is where you should be a thinking person as you read the Bible and God intends us to be thinking as we read it. We're to be submissive, humble learners but inquisitive learners. The best kind of learners are people who are asking questions. God says to Abraham, "You are to circumcise every male child that's born of you on the eighth day and anyone who's not circumcised on the eighth day, anyone who comes into your family and is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people. This is the covenant in your flesh. This is how you come to know me."

This is merely external and, in fact, in the New Testament we put it away. We no longer have to worry. Circumcision is not a part of entering into a relationship with God. Why, God, did you give that? Why did you do that? He has a reason for everything he does. Well, he already begins to unpack this and like I said, it's baby-talking, right? "So do this. You have to have this mark in your flesh so that you can be in relationship with me," Genesis 17:7.

Deuteronomy 10:16 in the context of a chapter where he's talking about loving God he says in Deuteronomy 10:16, "circumcise your hearts." If you want to have a love relationship with God, if you and I want to have a love relationship with God, we must have circumcised hearts. That is the whole point of circumcision. It wasn't just a rite that was used because it was like the... No, it was a picture of what must happen to be truly saved. It was a visible picture that communicates in a baby-talk fashion what needs to happen and this picture is picked up and reiterated throughout the Old Testament. Jeremiah 4:4, Jeremiah is speaking for God to the people of Israel, "The problem is that you need to circumcise the foreskin of your hearts. You need a new heart." Ezekiel 36:24-27, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean. I will take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Then you will be careful to keep My law. You see, you can't keep My law." The whole purpose of giving the law was to show that we couldn't keep it, we needed new hearts.

That's the whole teaching of the Bible, we need new hearts. We were dead in trespasses and sins. Our heart, our thinking, our feeling, our wanting, the affections, the cognition, our thinking is all messed up. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "The natural man cannot even understand the things of God for they are spiritually discerned." Can't understand it. Mentally doesn't make sense to the unbeliever. That's the thinking part of the heart, you see. The natural man is hostile toward God, Romans 8:7; cannot submit to the law of God. Do you see that? Hostile toward God, that's the affections. Cannot submit to the law of God, that's the will. What do we need? We need a new heart.

So that's the whole message of the Gospel. Jesus came to give us new hearts and that's what happens, that's why he says to Nicodemus, "You must be born again. You must be born of the Spirit. The Spirit is going to have to come and He's going to have to give you a new heart and until he gives you a new heart, you cannot please Me and you have no basis upon which to claim a new heart, but My Son can provide you with a new heart because He has a perfect heart. He's lived out a perfect life. His righteousness has fulfilled all the requirements of God's holy law." The Son of God left glory, lived a true human life, he lived a perfect life and he gave to God a perfect heart and he's able to come into the presence of God. He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Jesus has clean hands and a pure heart. He's the only man that can ever walk into the presence of God in his own merits, in his own righteousness. No one else. Our righteousness is filthy rags.

But he gives us a new heart, now so that's the big flow of Scripture. What happens then when you get saved is you get a new heart. That's what regeneration is. You now have God place his life in you and he gives you new ability to think, new ability to want, new ability to choose. He breaks the power of slavery. Jesus said, "If you know the truth, the truth will make you free. If you come to Me, I will set you free from sin, the slavery of sin."

So that's what happens, you have a new heart, but God is pleased to give you a whole cell heart change. He redeems and gives you at the center of your being a new heart, but you still have this in a sinful, fallen body, and because of that, we still have in our hearts, the center of our hearts is new but we have to work out the salvation God has put in the

center into the rest of our thinking and our wanting and our choosing and this is what Hebrews 4:12 is talking about. We need daily heart surgery. Even though we have a new heart at the very center and core of our being, we now have a war going on within us. As Paul says in Galatians 5:16, "Walk in the Spirit and you'll not carry out the desires of the flesh." You see, the flesh is still there desiring and the Spirit that God has put in you, the new nature is desiring, and you must keep in step with the Spirit so that you don't carry out the desires of the flesh and Hebrews 4:12 is basically saying how you do that. It's the word of God that does that.

Now that's just that preliminary observation. Here are the two points from Hebrews 4:12. The first is the complexity of the heart. The complexity of the human heart. That's the first point that you see in Hebrews 4:12 in a powerful way. Now, the most emphatic part of 4:12 is the second point we're going to come to which is the sufficiency of the divine word. So it's the complexity of the human heart and the sufficiency of the divine word, but I'm starting with the complexity of the human heart because I want to start there because that relates most directly to what we're talking about and it is a key part of this verse's teaching.

Basically, though, look at it from this vantage point: we need heart surgery, we need our thoughts and intentions, we don't know why we do what we do. "Why am I compelled to act this way in a circumstance? Why do I find myself doing that, losing my temper, being afraid, experiencing lustful thoughts? Why am I doing that in this circumstance? I can't figure it out. I don't understand the thoughts and intentions of my own heart but there is hope for me. I have the living and abiding word of God." You see, it's the word of God that is able, that last part of verse 12, it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It is skilled in judging. It is skilled in discerning. It is skilled in recognizing, the word of God is. But what I want you to see is the way that he describes the word of God, I mean, he lays on top of one another basically adjectives and participles that just show how amazing the word of God is. Isn't that obvious in the text?

The word of God is, first of all, living. The word of God is alive. It's not a dead book. It is a living book. The word of God is active. The word is "energes," it's the word we get "energy" from. It is able. It is powerful. So it's alive and it's powerful but he doesn't stop there. That's pretty impressive. Let's just talk about that. The word of God is alive and it's powerful. The author of Hebrews says it's alive and it's powerful and it's sharper than any two-edged sword. This thing is so sharp, it's sharper than any two-edged sword you've ever seen and that's still not all, fourthly, it's piercing. It goes through as far as the division of soul and spirit. It cuts with such precision, it is so sharp that it is able to lay open, it's like the picture, it's like a scalpel in the hands of a brilliant brain surgeon that is cutting and laying open the division between the cancer, the malignancy and the flesh that is still good and he's cutting with such precision and perfection. That's what the word of God does.

So he says it's alive, it's powerful, it's sharper, it's piercing, it can even pierce soul and spirit, joint and marrow. How amazing, and because of all of those four things, it is even able to do the unthinkable, it is able to judge the intentions and thoughts of your heart. It

took all of that to judge our heart. It's not a small thing to figure out why we do what we do. Do you see that? It's an amazing miraculous thing. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," Jeremiah 17:9, "who can know it? Who can understand it?" We looked a few weeks ago at Proverbs 20:5, remember, the purposes of a man's heart are like deep waters, a man of understanding can draw them out. But why we do what we do, it's hard to figure out. It's not readily available. It takes grace, it takes power, it takes God to do something.

Complexity of the human heart and understanding that helps us to help one another better. I mean, I think one of the reasons, you know, God could have, when he saved you, if you have repented and placed your faith in Christ, you've been born again, he could have when he saved you just fixed your heart completely, couldn't he? Don't you sometimes wish that he did? I mean, you ought to wish that, right? That's one of the best things about heaven, in fact, I mean, the best thing about heaven is Jesus is there but one of the very best things about heaven is sin is not. We won't struggle with sin anymore. No more sin. That's why it will be like, I love the word picture in Malachi 4, the picture of salvation, "When the Son of righteousness rises with healing in His wings, then we shall skip like calves from the stall." Think about that. You know, cows don't skip but calves do. A calf that has been in the stall all day, has so much an energy, just busting, and then you open that stall up and he is just frolicking around in the meadow, running around free, enjoying himself. He says that's what you and I will feel like when the shackles of sin are removed forever.

That is the victory that awaits the one whose hope is in Jesus Christ, in the meantime, though, God for his glory and his purposes, he has chosen to let you and I continue to have to battle on a daily basis with sin. Why has he done that? I think that biblically as you look at the whole of Scripture, the basic fundamental reason, the most fundamental reason is so that we would need him, as we sung about earlier, moment by moment. If he fixed us, you know, with our thinking we would just go off and do our own things and think we had built kingdoms for him, but by letting us have to continue to battle with sin, he keeps us humble and humble people are the ones that God blesses, humble people are the ones that know they need God, humble people pray. He lets us go through the battle of fighting with sin on a daily basis so that we might know him. It's kind of like if you, this isn't a great analogy but maybe it helps a little bit, the intimacy that you have with your child, a mother's intimacy with her child when she is nursing the child. Nobody else can feed the baby but mom and there's something beautiful about the way God has made that. You think about that and the Lord uses that image in Isaiah 49 to say, "Can a nursing mother forget the child nursing at her breast? Can a nursing mother forget the child nursing at her breast? If she forgets, I will not forget you," the Lord says. "Though she forget, I will not forget you." Well, think about that. That's a beautiful picture.

Now then, the child becomes a weaned child which we heard about last week, remember in the sermon that Phil Johnson preached, if you were here, Psalm 131. The weaned child is learning to be content. He can't just nestle up to mom and eat when he wants to like he could before, but he has learned that she's going to feed him and that the food is better now. "Whenever mom does feed me, it's going to be good." So he's content but he's still

dependent. A weaned child doesn't sit there and go and fix his own food. You know, you've got a two-year-old, you walk into the kitchen and there they are making an omelet up on a little thing. If that happens, you're in trouble because if they think they can make an omelet, the house may burn down, right? No, the weaned child needs the parent so there's a sense in which as a child grows up, they become less and less dependent. Now it's not a perfect analogy because it's supposed to be this way, right? It's not bad for our children. We don't want to keep them as little children their whole life, but there is something about God's relationship with us in this fallen world that it's like we are always to be like little children. We don't ever get past the weaned child element and part of what keeps you that way is you need to be close to your Father because sin is such a real and present danger. So that's why I think God leaves it that way and I think that is borne out in Scripture.

The complexity of the human heart, though, it's so hard to figure these things out. We can't oversimplify it. The things that you struggle with that you're really going to have victory over, over time, normally, God sometimes delivers people miraculously and they never struggle. You'll hear somebody say, "I used to be an alcoholic. I got saved and I never have wanted to drink again." Praise God for that. There are others who say, "I got saved and I'm fighting with the flesh to keep from going back to that. I know that it's not good and I'm trying to walk in the Spirit." They don't call themselves a Christian alcoholic, they are being biblical, some people do because there is so much confusion in the church. But they may battle with that desire or with sexual desire, same-sex attraction, anger, fear, whatever it is we can battle with these sins and the issue is it's a complex thing to really figure out exactly what's going on in the heart to deliver the person from that, and the way God is going to work is he's going to deliver you little by little over time as the word of God goes in and cuts away different parts. It's not going to happen like that, though. That's not the norm. You may have breakthroughs when things become very clear to you and God may give you great grace, but often even then if you feel like you're delivered from a sin, you may find yourself in a few years later coming back and realizing, "Wait a minute, it's still there. I need to watch out for that." Be humble. Seek the Lord.

And part of the reason that it's so complex, I think, the word picture he's using is think about you're trying to cut and divide soul and spirit. You're trying to cut and divide into the very bone, the joint and the marrow. You're doing something that takes great precision. That's what's happening in your heart when God is working to make us holy. That's because the sins that we struggle with, they are three-dimensional.

Something that Jeremy Pierre says in his book that I think is very helpful, that we often tend to think as Christians in two-dimensional terms about sin and we need to think in three-dimensional terms. We look at it too simply. You know, it's wrong, you did that, stop it. The Bob Newhart video. Interesting, Bob Newhart has the name new heart for a sermon like this. Anyway. The Newhart video where if you haven't seen it, Google it online and just watch it, where he basically, a counselee comes in, they've got problems and this lady is fearful of being buried alive in a box, and he says, "It only takes five minutes for our counseling session," and the reason is his whole counseling method is

just whatever her problem is to say, "Stop it!" You know, they are done in two minutes or so, three minutes and she's got two minutes left because you have to pay five dollars for five minutes and he doesn't make change so she wants her whole five minutes and she keeps bringing up other problems. You know, she's bulimic, she sticks her finger in her throat and makes herself throw up. He says, "Stop it!" She's afraid to drive, "Stop it! You've got to get around, stop it!" That's his whole counsel.

Well, that's obviously a funny satire but we can sometimes be two-dimensional in almost that way. We can focus on the wrong aspect and the reality of sin is that it is three-dimensional. Think about three dimensions. I mentioned math earlier, you think of the X axis, the Y axis, right, and the Z axis, that's the third dimension, the Z axis so that you have a three-dimensional thing, not just a two-dimensional graph. We can look at sin sometimes two-dimensionally and forget there is a third aspect. Well, think about the heart, sins of the heart. You have your thinking, you have your wanting, you have your choosing, and these things all interrelate and if we think about it correctly and we understand it's more complex and intricate, then we can be more discerning as we evaluate our hearts and we help one another to evaluate our hearts and we can treat it better.

Jeremy Pierre talks about this and he talks about a time when his children, their cousins had come into town and they were staying with them and they were living at this time by a farm that had some ponies in a fenced-in area, and he had been very clear with all his three girls that, or three children, you never climb the fence to get to where those ponies are. Well, on this particular day, their cousins, they were older cousins, the older daughter climbed over the fence with the cousins and went into the area where the ponies were, and then later that night she came and she said, "I need to tell you, dad, I sinned today. I disobeyed you." And she confessed what she had done and he said, you know, a two-dimensional kind of look at that would have said, "You know, the Bible says you should honor your father and mother." Now the two dimensions are still good. I'm not saying that, you have to have all three. The Bible, what does the Bible say? Let's appeal to the mind, what does the Bible say? The Bible says you should honor your father and your mother. Did you do that? No. That's a part of it, right? You made a decision, that's the second dimension, to disobey. You need to repent of that. That's right. But he said I realized as I was thinking about this was that she would never, I'll bet my life savings, he said, on the fact that she would not have climbed that fence had not her older cousins been there with her. What was going on in her heart? So he asked some questions to her, "Why did you do that, honey?" And he essentially helped her to see she did that because she wanted to be big like her cousins, she wanted to please her cousins. It wasn't just that she was disobeying her dad and she just needs to value her dad, she needed to do that but he showed her, "You were wanting the approval of your cousins more than you wanted the approval ultimately not just of dad but of God. You see, your heart was wanting something you shouldn't have wanted."

Do you see how the repentance is deeper and more helpful? Rather than just telling her, "You did what's wrong. God tells you to obey the word and honor your parents, and so you need to go to your room, I'm going to discipline you." All of that could be part of it

but by helping her see why did you do what you did, you were valuing the approval of men more than the approval of God. You've gotten to her heart. You've dug deeper. Do you see that? And you've laid open and the repentance is more complete. It's three-dimensional and the word of God does that, and if we are patient and helpful, and this is why we need one another. I can't even see myself the way that you can if you're helping me with a verse of Scripture. We're talking it over. Isn't it amazing how when you are talking with somebody else, they tell you what you know but it almost felt like you didn't even know it until they said it? They say it and you say, "Of course I know that but, man, that hit me." I think the other reason he has made us to not make us well all at once is so we need each other. That goes back to the first message I preached on this series was talking about how we are to be like God and God is a Trinity and he works together and he makes us to work together. There are no Lone Ranger Christians. There are no healthy Lone Ranger Christians, not as healthy as they could be. Nowhere close because God wills that you and I work together to pursue sanctification.

But the heart is complex and so we need to be discerning and we need to let the word keep coming in and exposing various aspects. So when you have a problem, like we said, somebody feels like, an alcoholic feels compelled to drink. I use the term alcoholic, you know, biblically a drunk, right, that's what the Bible calls it. But they feel the compulsion and though they are a believer, they've been saved, they are trusting in Christ, they still feel this desire, part of helping them is to apply the word and part of them helping themselves is to be in the word so that the word is getting deeper into the heart. It's helping them understand that various aspects, how the affections, how the will has been bound. One of the things that's really helpful that I think we need to think about, sometimes we forget, is there is a power of the will in habituation, that when you make a decision and you do it, it's easier to do it again, and when you do it again and again and again, even your body becomes accustomed, and there are chemical things happening in your body that feel right as you continue to do it. Now what the Bible teaches is that all that's happening in your body is not deterministic. It cannot make you do anything. You are responsible for what you do. The alcoholic is responsible for drinking alcohol. The 5,000th time he did it, he's still responsible.

The Bible says repent, believe the Gospel, trust in the Lord, but there is something about that habituation that we can understand. So in a sense you've made your bed, you've gotten there over time, God generally is going to lead you out step by step by step, learning how to start saying no and to form habits of doing things right and this is how God made our hearts. He made us to be people who form habits and it's good. We need it. I mean, think about driving. My two kids have learned to drive in the last few years and you are teaching driving, you go back and you think about what you're already doing that you don't think about, and think about how hard it is to drive around here. I grew up in this area. It was a lot easier learning to drive in 1980 than it is today. A lot easier. It was like you look that way, look that way, turn left. Two lanes, that was it, everywhere. Now it's like there is a turn lane in the middle, there are two lanes going this way, there are two lanes going that way, there are people coming out. It's like you would pull out of a road and there's nobody else turning on the road anywhere close to you. Now you're turning out with a guy turning out just right here, there's a guy turning this way, that way. I mean,

it's a lot to take in, but what happens is you and I aren't stressed out when we drive if you've been driving for a long time, you're not, unless you're dealing with maybe the fear of driving like the Bob Newhart video was talking about. You have habituated yourself to think and to discern and to look and without even thinking, you're processing information and you're able to function and have a conversation about something totally unrelated as you drive.

The wonder of how God made you. That's the glory of humanity that God put into us. Sin takes that and twists it and distorts it and makes someone into what the world says is an addict. It's habituation and the soul being habituated, the will being habituated, the emotions being conditioned, the affections being conditioned, the mind believing untruths, lies, and the person becoming bound by that. Now the true Christian can't remain bound but the true Christian can feel like he's bound. The true Christian has to learn who he is in Christ, though, that you can walk in victory, that you are no longer a slave.

I love the image that Martyn Lloyd-Jones uses of this, he says, you know, imagine talking about we are free in Christ. If you are in Christ, you are free indeed. In his commentary on Romans 6 he talks about this, he says that imagine you had grown up your entire life as a slave and your slave master was harsh and brutal and so he's speaking of the American experience, he says imagine you were a slave in America and after the Emancipation Proclamation, the Civil War, you're now a free man and you're walking along the streets of the town that you have lived in but now you are a free man. Imagine if you hear the voice behind you, you don't see him, you hear the voice of your former slave master, what's going to happen emotionally? You've been habituated in a sort of a subservient, broken-down, emotionally fearful, anxious, your heart starts beating faster, your body starts responding, the emotions are there, what do you have to do? You have to learn to walk in truth. You are a free man. It doesn't matter what you feel like, you're a free man. But even understanding how the heart works helps us to with more skill in our own hearts and with each other, more patience to, "I need to really, I need to meditate on that." This man to walk in town and not feel afraid anymore, he's got to sit and think about, "I'm a free man. I've got to fill my mind with that reality." Lloyd-Jones says that's what the Christian must do. You are free in Christ. Rejoice in that. Meditate on that and as you see the different areas that the values that you have that are wrong, the decisions that you made that are wrong, the thinking in your mind that is wrong, as you are able, the word of God will cut that and remove it and it will set you free.

The sufficiency of the divine word, really quickly. This wasn't an exposition of this passage, I would have probably taken six weeks to preach on this passage if I was preaching on it for real and I apologize. But essentially the second point is going to be like two minutes long. The sufficiency of the word, it does all those things, it judges the intentions of the heart and look what it does in verse 13, it lays you bare. It lays us bare, "no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The word of God comes in and the struggles that we have, it lays bare what's there and it leaves us, in a sense, naked before God. No pretensions. "There it is, Lord. There's my heart. There are the values that are wrong.

There is the thinking that's wrong. There are the decisions, the commitments that are wrong. It's all laid bare right before you."

That's the power of the word of God. It leaves you without any answer, any trust in yourself, and then verses 14 to 16, the second thing it does, the beautiful sufficiency of the word of God is it drives you to Christ. Do you see what he says? This is why he goes right after that and says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest." Look at your high priest. Go to Jesus. He has died for you. He has paid for your sins. Run to him. Not only has he given you a standing that though you right now are wanting something you shouldn't want, you're desiring something you shouldn't desire, you're feeling compelled with something you shouldn't be compelled to, run to Jesus and know that he never desired anything other than to please the Father, and you stand before God clothed in his righteousness. God doesn't see you as one who is struggling now, God sees you robed in the righteousness of Christ if you are trusting in Jesus' blood, his death, his resurrection. Trust in that, and then also running to Jesus, he is your strength and your righteousness. Wait upon the Lord and you renew strength. He gives you strength to now say no, to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, to put on the new man.

So the word of God, it pierces to show us what's wrong but it always, the point of it is always not to leave you there, the purpose of the word of God is always to make you run to Jesus, to find in him a glorious Savior who is everything that you need. So run to Christ. God has given us the opportunity to be renewed in every way but it's a day-by-day process of heart surgery where we see our sin and we see the sufficiency of our Savior.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for the reality of our salvation, what you've done for us in Christ. We pray that you would help those who are here who have not repented and placed their faith in Jesus that they might today run to Christ, that they might turn from trusting in themselves and they might submit themselves to Jesus as Lord. Father, grant them repentance. Grant them faith. May they know the joy and freedom that belongs in your family. Father, continue to bless us as we worship you. In Jesus' name. Amen.