

October 26, 2025

“Gentle and Lowly: What Our Sins Evoke” (Chapter 7 in Dane Ortlund’s Gentle and Lowly)
[Hosea 11:1-11](#) and [Romans 5:18-6:11](#)

***Highlighted text appeared on screen during service.

Just in case we forget this gracious invitation from Jesus – or think it’s too good to be true, let’s share it out loud once again: “Come to Me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble (or lowly) in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) The heart of Christ for sinners and sufferers, like you and me, is gentle and humble, leading to a lightness and rest which this world (even religion) can’t offer.

It turns out that all kinds of gifts spill out of the heart of Jesus. It’s a heart full of surprises; some we may have missed hearing about altogether while other aspects of Christ’s heart were underemphasized. This week’s glance into the heart of Christ is, in many ways, surprising.

Read [Romans 5:18-6:11](#)

As we come to chapter 7, the first thing we see is the chapter title: “What Our Sins Evoke.” Then, the verse just under the title is part of Hosea 11:8 that says “My heart recoils within Me.” And the first paragraph Ortlund writes is blistering as well. You may have immediately thought, “Here we go with the ‘sin thing!’ I knew Dane Ortlund and you were just setting us up to eventually discover how mad God really is!” Others may have been glad to get to the ‘sin thing.’ You’re saying, “Finally! I’m not a big fan of Jesus meek and mild. We need a tougher Jesus.”

What DO our sins evoke?

It may not be what we think . . . or have been taught to believe.

First, let’s get as honest as we can about sin. As Ortlund puts it, “We do not feel the true weight of sin.” (Page 67) And then he quotes Martyn Lloyd-Jones [1899-1981; pastored for 30 years at Westminster Chapel in London] who writes there is a “. . . mechanism in you as a result of sin that will always be defending you against every accusation. We are all on very good terms with ourselves, and we can always put up a good case for ourselves.” (Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Seeking the Face of God*) He’s saying that our sin makes it hard to see/come clean about our sin.

Do you remember a couple weeks ago when we talked about Sin Thresholds and how I mentioned we often hit our threshold for others just past where we ourselves land? The other day I was at 24 ½ and Patterson. 5 cars turned left in front of us AFTER we had a green light. I was not okay with that, but a little later found myself on 6 & 50 needing to turn left at Rimrock. I had a green arrow, which may have been yellow by the time I entered the intersection. It was possibly red before I completed my turn. I’m not sure how anyone felt about me in that intersection, but they probably didn’t mind it nearly as much as I did at 24 ½ and Patterson. That’s a playful example of what Martyn Lloyd-Jones refers to as our sin defense mechanism.

Last week I mentioned one emphasis we have in the Reformed Tradition, regarding God's initiative vs. our choice when it comes to salvation. Related to the issue of sin and our built-in defense mechanisms, I have also come to appreciate another particular emphasis on our branch of the Church Family Tree; one that I never would have been drawn to a couple decades ago. Are you ready for it? "The Reality of Sin in All Flesh." Doesn't that grab you? Should we put it on our letterhead or add it to our mission statement; maybe highlight it on our website?

What I like – beside that's it's true – is that it gives us permission to stop defending ourselves. Being defensive takes a lot of effort and is quite ineffective. Now, we don't have to be all 'hell, fire and brimstone' about it, but we also don't have to skirt around the reality of sin in all people – starting with the reality of sin in US. Here's an even better reason why we should come clean about sin – not in paralyzing shame but with brutal honesty: Paul said, "But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." (Rom. 5:20b)

Paul goes on (Romans 6:1ff) to make it clear this doesn't mean we should go on sinning to get more grace. Not a chance! That makes no sense. What he does say is that we should plunge ourselves into the heart and life of Christ – recognizing that our baptism joins us with Jesus in His death and resurrection – which is what sets us free from sin and death.

God also showed this surprising truth – that more sin means more grace – through the prophet Hosea. Hosea was a contemporary prophet with Isaiah, mostly serving in the Northern Kingdom of Israel for over 60 years. Some of his time as a prophet included Israel's notable military success and prosperity. As is often the case, all that success and prosperity went to their heads, and they did what they wanted – including the worship of idols/Baals. In Hosea 11 it's clear the people of God are turning away from God. "The more I called them, the more they went from Me." (Hosea 11:2a) and "My people are bent on turning away from Me." (Hosea 11:7a)

And then we get to the highlighted verse at the start of the chapter: "My heart recoils within Me. . ." (Hosea 11:8c) Just before this – but after the reminder Israel keeps turning away – God says, 'but I still can't see Myself treating you harshly or without care, the way I did with Admah and Zeboiim' – two little towns near Sodom and Gomorrah. Then there's the piece about His "heart recoiling." Other translations include reacting, churning, erupting.

But what is it that comes spilling out of God's heart in response to His children's disobedience?

It isn't what we've come to think it might be or ought to be. It's not molten lava mixed with white hot anger. "... My compassion grows warm and tender." (Hosea 11:8d) Warm and tender? Shouldn't it be something like, "I'm going to take you out to the woodshed and teach you a lesson you'll never forget"? That's not what God says through Hosea. And that's not what Paul says either. "Where sin increases? [What then?] Grace abounds!"

Impatience doesn't abound. Fierce anger doesn't abound. Harsh lectures don't abound. Probationary action plans don't abound. Warm and tender grace abounds!

And it's not because God is a big softie, grandparent type who thinks we can do no wrong or winks at our sin. "Aren't they just so adorable? Sure they make a mistake every now and then, but who doesn't?" God goes on to say through Hosea that He "roars like a lion; [and] when He roars His children come trembling from the west." Think **THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe)** when Mr. Beaver says to Susan – after she asked if Aslan was safe – "Of course he isn't safe . . . but he's good!"

Grace . . . is good! Grace is what the human heart – weighed down by sin and suffering – longs for. I also love that Dane Ortlund correctly reminds us grace isn't a thing; it's a person. (Page 69) Grace comes to us in Jesus Christ precisely when we sin and struggle with sin. This is one of the emphases in the Puritan movement. They had saying: "When we sin, the very heart of Christ is drawn out to us."

Is that what you learned about the heart of God regarding your sin? [I didn't]

Did you and I learn that where our sin increased, so did God's grace?

Or did we hear something else about the effect our sin had on how Jesus felt about us?

Maybe you've heard someone articulate the logical question Dane Ortlund voices: "If Christ is perfectly holy, must He not necessarily withdraw from our sin?" (Page 69) It IS a logical question; but the answer is NO. He doesn't withdraw from us when we sin. Jesus moves toward us as we sin and IN our sin. But how can that be – a holy God getting closer to us and our sin?

Ortlund reminds us this is a MYSTERY; that reconciling Christ's holiness and His tenderness is impossible from our vantage point. They just both ARE – holiness and tenderness. If only we had another metaphor to help us. Oh look, Thomas Goodwin came up with one more than 350 years ago! A parent hates the sickness/disease of his/her hurting child, but that very sickness/disease draws the parent to be closer to their son/daughter and care more deeply than ever before. (Page 70) So God despises sin but loves us all the more because sin is ravaging and ruining the vitality of our lives.

Ortlund also talks about sin and the disciplinary side of Christ, (Page 71) and this is important as we try to reconcile God's strong feelings about sin – He's not a fan – with His strong love for us. Just because Christ's heart goes out to us in the midst of our sin and forgives it completely, doesn't mean there isn't a need for loving discipline. At the end of September we were in Chapter 3 of "Gentle and Lowly." Ortlund took us to the Book of Hebrews. It in Hebrews 12 that the writer quotes part of Proverbs 3: "My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when you are punished by Him; the Lord disciplines those whom He loves . . . (Proverbs 3:11-12 quoted in Hebrews 12:5-6) There are consequences to our sin, to be sure. But even God's discipline and correction is done out of love.

Some of you have been to a Physical Therapist and may have referred to him or her as your Physical Terrorist because of the pain and struggle they introduce into your life. But that person wants nothing more than your complete healing, health and renewed strength. Similarly, the discipline of the Lord flows from a heart that is drawn to us in love.

So a quick summary: What do our sins evoke? Compassion, nearness, warmth, tenderness, love and GRACE! Now . . .

What does that evoke from you and me?

Gratitude and joy?

More guilt and shame?

Indifference?

I want to end by going back to the first paragraph on page 67. Ortlund writes, “It is probably impossible to conceive of the horror of hell and of the ferocity of retributive justice and righteous wrath that will sweep over those found on the last day to be out of Christ.” Then there’s the sentence on page 70: “For those who do not belong to Him, sins evoke holy wrath.” Yikes! I’m not sure how you felt about hearing or reading that this week. And it probably evokes a question you’ve probably heard or asked yourself: “How could a loving God send anyone to hell?” [I do feel compelled to ask this brutally honest and pointed question: What about the two or three people – or three dozen – that we wouldn’t mind at all being sent to hell?]

Here’s a more important question: Are our hearts burdened for those who don’t YET know the Gentle and Humble Savior who invites “all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens” to come to Him?

Are our hearts filled with compassion and sympathy for those outside of Christ?

Are our hearts drawn to them?

Or do we recoil – not with compassion, warmth and tenderness like the God of Israel made clear through Hosea, but with disgust and in judgment and a heartless, “They deserve what they get”?

How can you and I **Share and Show** the gentleness and humility of Jesus’ heart?

How can we talk about **Grace and Sin**?

It might be best to talk about our own sin and God’s grace more than ‘their’ sin. That might help disarm their Sin Defense Mechanism and open them up to the Good News of Jesus; the One who graciously invites all who are weary to come to Him.