

Changeup
March 6, 2016

I want to start this morning by asking you two questions. I do not want anyone to call out your own answer to the question. Do not raise your hand. I will not call on you.

The first question is this. (**My first _____ was:** _____) What was the first sin you can remember committing? It may not be the first actual sin. But it was the first sin that you felt really guilty of and you have never forgotten it.

We all commit lots of sins. And some of them, we don't even think of as sins. For example, all of us are guilty of failing to take God's will into account as we live our lives. We make all kinds of decisions about us without any thought to what God would choose for us. And we have been doing this all our lives.

But more likely the sin you are thinking about was the breaking of a commandment. You broke one of the do's or don'ts. You did something you knew you were not supposed to do, or you failed to do something you knew you were supposed to do.

Do you remember what it was? What sin did you commit? Did you steal something? Maybe you borrowed something without asking, and it got damaged or broken or lost, or you just forgot to return it. Was your first remembered sin a lie you told? Was it a breaking of a house rule, like playing ball in the house, and a lamp or window or something got broken? Maybe you got mad at someone and hit them and hurt them and they cried. Maybe you said something nasty to someone and you have never forgotten the look on their face. Maybe you said something as a joke, but it hurt, embarrassed, or angered the person you spoke of.

The second question is this. How long ago was your first remembered sin? It may not have been that long ago for some of you and for others it was decades ago. When did this sin occur? How many days, or weeks, or months, or years has it been since you committed this sin?

(It was _____ (a number) _____ (pick one: days, weeks, months, years) ago.)

I'm going to tell you mine. I can remember stealing some candy from a drug store when I was about nine or ten years old. I remember feeling very guilty afterward and have never stolen anything again. I do not think of that sin often. There are other sins, much worse to me than that one, that I remember now and then.

When I committed that sin, God would have been just to end my life at that time.

Romans 6:23 (NIV) For the wages of sin is death...

When I first sinned, God could have taken me out of this world. He could have judged me guilty and sent me to hell. But He did not. And...**Every moment of life since my first sin has been Grace Time.** God has graced you too with undeserved life. God has favored you with undeserved life.

You are currently living on grace time. God is graciously letting you live. Foundation number two says that God is the creator of all life. You were created by God. You are His creation. Life

is an act of God. It is not a result of mother nature. There was nothing natural or coincidental or unplanned about you. God created you. Jesus made you.

Jesus created you for Himself. That was foundation number 5. He can do anything He wants with your life. When you sin, God can remove you from His world. God does not owe you a life here on earth. He does not owe you 5 years of life, 10 years of life, 20 years of life, 90 years of life. When someone young dies we say things like, "He got cheated." But no one gets cheated of time on earth. We are all living on grace time. We are all getting more life than we deserve to have.

When I stole that candy, I deserved death and hell right then. God owed me nothing but justice. Justice would have found me guilty and condemned me to death. And make no mistake about it, **Someone will die for my sin.**

But for right now, God is longsuffering towards me. Right now I am living on grace time.

And that raises a question. Why did God not end my life when I first sinned? Why did God not end your life when you first sinned? For the answer to that question, look with me at Paul's letter to the church at Rome.

In this letter, Paul is pointing out how everyone is guilty of sin, and since this is so, what right do we have to condemn someone else for their sins. So he isn't making the same point I have been making. But at the end of his answer, he will give us the answer to our question about why God is giving us grace time.

Romans 2:1-4 (NIV) You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

He writes here of our grace time. God could have taken us out of the world. But He is being kind towards us, tolerant of our ignorance, and patient with us... in order to... lead us to repentance. As long as you resist God, fail to confess and repent of your sin, you are showing contempt for God. You are adding to your sin, compounding the penalty of your sin.

Grace time is intended to lead you towards repentance. The fact that God did not put you to death and send you to hell for the first sin you committed, is a great kindness. God's purpose in being so kind to you was to lead you to repentance.

Do you see how great God's love for you is? Do you see how much He cares about you? He values you. He wants to save you from hell. But note, that doing so requires you to repent of your sin.

God is a compassionate, gracious God, as we saw in last week's sermon. God is not quick to condemn us for our sin. Instead, because God loves us so much, He gives us a chance to confess our sinfulness and repent of it.

Today, we will explore what is included in this word, repent. We're going to start by looking at a passage in the book of Acts. In this passage, Paul, the missionary, is preaching the good news to some philosophers in the city of Athens, Greece.

Acts 17:30-31 (NIV) "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone--an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed."

The phrase "but now" means that history reached a transition point. With the death and resurrection of Jesus history came to a transition point. God's expectations of all people changed with this fuller revelation of God's purposes revealed in Jesus.

In the good news message about Jesus, Christians are inviting all people to repent and believe on Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. It is God's command that every person repent of their sins. Repentance is vital to your salvation.

The word repent means to turn. In the context of the Bible it means to turn from living sinfully and start living in obedience to God.

Once you realize you are a sinner, believing on Jesus is the first order of business. But repenting of sin is the immediate second step.

A young girl became a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. Someone asked her, "What were you before?" She said, "I was a sinner." Then she was asked, "What are you now?" She answered, "A sinner." They asked, "What's the difference?" She answered, "Before, I was a sinner running after sin. But now I'm a sinner running away from sin."

Repentance means to turn away from sin and to keep going away from sin. God has given you grace time to hear the good news and be saved. But **there is something that has to happen in your heart that gets you from belief in Jesus to repentance of sin.** Paul describes it this way.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 (NIV) ...yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.

He had to rebuke them in an earlier letter. And it made them sad, grieved, sorry. He isn't happy that they were saddened, but happy that in their sorrow they changed their behavior. They turned from their sin. Since they repented, he did not have to rebuke them further. He did not have to harm them. And then he makes the point about repentance that we need to see.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 (NIV) Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

The word "sorrow" is grief. You feel sad about something. He mentions two kinds of sorrow, godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.

Worldly sorrow may be about someone else. You sinned against someone else and hurt them, and you are sorry about that. Most of us have said something that hurt someone else. We

intended it as a joke. But the person did not take it as a joke. The look of hurt, or disappointment, or embarrassment on their face has haunted us ever since. And we are sorry for having said it.

Worldly sorrow may be about yourself. You are not so much sorry you did something wrong, but sorry that you got caught. You are sorry for the punishment or consequences of your action.

In the phrase, "godly sorrow", the word "godly" refers to God. This word is related to piety and devotion to God. (**Godly = "to look to the things of God"**) The word godly means "to look to the things of God". Godly does not mean to be God-like or to have the character of God. Godly means to seek to know and do God's will.

Remember Foundation #1, God is real. So give God the attention He deserves. Godly sorrow, then, is grief over my sin's insult of God. I have dishonored the importance of God. Also I have saddened God by my sin. **Godly sorrow is sorrow over how my sin has affected God.** It is not the same as regret that I got caught or got punished. It is sorrow over how my sin affected God.

You may think your sin does not affect God, but it does. He loves you too much not to be affected by your sin. He must judge sin, but He doesn't want anyone to be condemned to hell. God is greatly saddened by my sin and what I will get for my sin. He wants all people to come to Him in heaven by faith in Jesus.

God loves us. He gives us grace time to hear the good news. And when we hear it, God wants us to believe on Jesus. He wants us to feel sorrow for our sins against Him and then confess and turn from our sins. But the repenting does not end with that beginning.

Repent as often as you confess sin to Jesus.

Repentance is not just required when you first become a follower of Jesus. You only get baptized once. But you need to turn from sin whenever you become aware of it.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus writes to seven groups of Christians. He warns several of these groups of Christians that He is not satisfied with their behavior and calls them to repent. Any time we sin, and discover it, we need to confess and repent of our sins.

Now here is a caution about your understanding of repentance.

Repentance does not earn you salvation, but is evidence of your salvation.

If you do not repent of your sin, you are not saved, no matter what you say. All of the presidential candidates, except one, have stated that they are Christians. But looking at their lives, there does not enough appear to be enough evidence to prove that they are Christians. Anyone can claim to be a Christian. But repentance will be visible in your words and actions.

In the 1950s there was a gangster in California by the name of Mickey Cohen. Time magazine mentioned him in an article in 1957. Some people he had met had been trying to share Jesus with him and at one point convinced him to attend a Billy Graham crusade. He did so and came away much impressed. He said to his friends, "I am very high on the Christian way of life." They were encouraged by this, in the weeks to follow, look for evidence of true conversion. But with the passing of time no one could detect any change in Cohen's life. Finally they confronted him with the reality that being a Christian meant he would have to give up his friends and his profession as a gangster. Cohen disagreed. His argument was that since there are Christian

football players, Christian cowboys, and Christian politicians; why not a Christian gangster? Mickey Cohen missed the part that he had to repent of his sin in order to be saved. I don't want you to miss it.

There is no conversion to Jesus without repentance from sin. Conversion involves a change of belief, but if there is no change of behavior, it is not the right kind of belief.

While repentance is required for salvation, it is not repentance that saves you. The blood of Jesus saves you. Repentance is evidence of belief in Jesus and godly sorrow in your heart.

Let's wrap this up. When I stole that candy, I deserved death and hell right then. But instead, God gave me grace time to hear the good news that God sent Jesus to die in my place. By His blood I can be saved.

I said earlier that the wages of sin is death. Someone will die for my sin. It will be me, or I could let it be Jesus.

God sent Jesus to die in our place, if we will believe on Him for forgiveness. If not, then we will die for our sins. But that is not what God wants for you. He wants you to realize you are living on grace time.

Won't you put your faith in Jesus' blood today?

Won't you confess your sin to God?

Won't you repent of your sin, turning your life over to Jesus as Lord?