

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

“THE HIGH COST OF SIN”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

The psalmist said, “My iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me” (Ps. 38:4). Welcome to our study of the high cost of sin. We live in a world that acts like sin is pleasurable, and where it’s fun to name things that are sinful. People just view sin as part of life. Sin is just a way of living. Sin is commonplace. But God has made it clear in the New Testament that He wants His people to understand the high cost of sin, and to not take it for granted so that they recognize it for what it is. Today I want us to consider what sin will cost you. If you view sin as the world views it, and if you get involved in sin and do not make it right, what will sin cost you in this life?

We first learn in Ezekiel 18:4 that sin causes death. Ezekiel wrote, “The soul who sins shall die.” Are we talking about physical death? Not necessarily. That may be a casualty of sin. But when we talk about death, we are talking about spiritual death. The soul who sins is going to die and wither spiritually because he is outside of Jesus, the Son of God, and is outside of the grace of God. The Bible tells us that sin is unrighteousness. In 1 John 3:4 and 1 John 5:17 we are told that sin is righteousness, and that it will cause us to live lives that are not right in God’s sight.

What else will sin cost us? Proverbs 13:15 says, “The way of the transgressor is hard.” People promote sin as though it’s fun and as if it’s the best life to live. But we need to realize that God says that sin will cost us. It will be the hardest life that any person has ever lived. There may be gratifying pleasures immediately. Hebrews 11:25 speaks of “a passing pleasure.” But it does pass; the joy does fade; the fun gets less each time. Sin might cost us our health. It might cost us friends. It might even cost us Heaven itself if we do not repent of that sin. Living in sin is a hard life. The apostle Paul said in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The wages of sin are spiritual death. If we live in sin, remain in sin, and die in sin, we will go where sinners go—to the horrible place called Hell where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, great sorrow, and eternal darkness. The Scriptures say that the smoke of their torment goes up “forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). Hell is a place where, as Jesus explained, a rich, sinful man wanted just one drop of water (Lk. 16). Sin will cost us greatly. It dirties our lives. In Isaiah 64:6 the Bible says that “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.” Apart from God, without the sacrifice of Jesus, and trying to live by depending only on ourselves, sin become a stain on us (2 Cor. 7:1).

Sin will cost us greatly when it comes to the kingdom. In Acts 8 we see Simon obeying the Gospel and became a Christian. He then saw the gift of God being given to people, and he reverts back to his old life. He tried to buy the gift with money. But Peter told him,

“Your money perish with you. You thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you” (vss. 20-22).

What happened to Simon? He had salvation, but now was in a state where he would perish. He was in the kingdom where all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3). But suddenly he was outside of the kingdom, the grace and favor of God, and those who love righteousness.

Ultimately sin will cost us our souls. Look again at Ezekiel 18:4—“Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins shall die.” Sin will cost us the most-valuable thing ever—our souls. Think about the rich fool in Luke 12:15-21. He had a great crop year. So he said, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” What did that man lose? He lost it all because he lost his soul. Think about what Jesus said in Mark 8:36-37 concerning the value of the soul—“What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Nothing can compare with the value of our souls. If we have lots of fun, pleasure, and wealth, we do not go to Heaven, then we will have lost everything. The Bible says that the spirit returns to God Who gave it (Eccl. 12:7). “He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins” (Jas. 5:20). One day this world and everything that is in it will fade away. But the person who does the will of God will live forever.

The problem with losing our souls is that when we do that, we will have lost everything—except our memory! In Luke 16 the rich man was in torment, and Abraham said to him, “Son, remember.” The problem with losing our souls is that if we go to Hell and are lost eternally, we will regret it every moment. We will remember what we had in this life. We will remember the opportunities that we failed to seize. We will remember Gospel sermons that we heard, but did not obey. Can’t you imagine how horrible those memories will be for all eternity? Sin will cost us the greatest thing ever—our immortal souls.

Sin will result in a separation from God Himself. Notice Isaiah 59:1-2, where the Scripture says,

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

Sin causes the relationship between God and man to be severed. Jesus came to bring that relationship back together. God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil,” and thus cannot even look upon wickedness (Hab. 1:13). God is so holy that He cannot even view such things. Someone might ask, “Why is it so bad to be separated from God?” It is bad because such people are separated from the source of all love. In 1 John 4:8 we are told that “God is love.” There is no love in a life where God does not exist. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we can be called children of God” (1 Jn. 3:1). People in the world may tell you that they love you, and the devil may try to make you think he loves you. But the world and the devil will stab you in the back. I can promise you that the devil is the “father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning” (Jn. 8:44). Without God we are separated from love.

We also are separated from God’s help through the avenue of prayer. Do you realize that if you live a life of sin, you cannot pray to God? In John 9:31 we are told, “God does not hear the prayer of sinners.” If a man sins against the marriage relationship, and does not deal with his wife properly, even his prayers are hindered. In Proverbs 28:9 we are told, “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” God says, “Don’t pray to Me if you’re not going to listen to Me.” The psalmist said, “If I

regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Ps. 66:18). If we have sin in our lives, God will not hear our prayers. Thus, sin separates us from the love of God, and it prevents us from communicating with God.

If we are in sin, we do not have “all spiritual blessings.” Those are for faithful Christians who are “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). When we are in Christ, we have everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). God has promised us eternal life. Jesus said that the righteous would go away into eternal life (Mt. 25:46). If sin separates us from God, and if sin separates us from Christ, then we do not have such spiritual blessings. Whether we realize it or not, when we separate ourselves from God, we automatically align ourselves with the devil. We become his friend, and he has us exactly where he wants us. We are in his army. He is “the roaring lion who seeks whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). He wants to separate us as the chaff is separated from the wheat, and use us in his service. We then become on the devil’s side when we are separated from God.

But what else will sin do to us? It will make us slaves. Romans 6:16-18 tells us that to whomever we present ourselves, whether as slaves of sin or slaves of obedience, we are slaves to that one. If we give ourselves to lives of sin, then I become enslaved by it. Think of all the people whom you can imagine who might have started out using drugs “recreationally—for just a little fun.” Look at their lives now, and you will see that those lives are lives of misery. Such people are doing whatever it takes to get their next fix. They likely are involved in criminal activities. The drugs have affected their health, their families, and their marriages. Such individuals have separated themselves from many of their past friends. Why? It is because they are slaves to the drugs.

Think about all the people whose lives have been wrecked by alcohol. Think about the families that have been torn apart, the relationships that have been broken, and the people whose health has been damaged. The Bible tells us that “wine is a mocker and strong drink is a brawler” (Prov. 20:1). Why is it that those people can’t seem to break from alcohol? Well, they can—but they are deeply enslaved to it.

Think about the prostitutes who work the streets in different towns. Why do they do such things? They have given themselves over to slavery, and have become enslaved by their own lusts and passions. We must realize that if we get involved in sin, it will cost us. Sin is going to make us its slaves. We will let it be our master. And whatever sin it is that is ruling our lives, we will allow it to do whatever we have to do to keep living in such sin.

As a country, we look back upon the times of slavery, and we are appalled by it. Yet individually we sometimes allow our lives become lives of slavery to sin. Would you willingly consider yourself as being a slave? Would you want people to think of you in that way? If not, then why give yourself over to sin? Sin makes you its slave and becomes your master. You then, operate at its whims and desires. We must be careful not to become involved in the slavery of sin.

Sin might also cost us our physical health. Think about people in the Bible who got involved in sin, and the cost they paid for it. Do you remember Uzzah? David was bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem on a cart. As the cart crossed Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah reached up to stabilize the Ark, and God dropped him dead on the spot. Why? It was because he broke God’s law. The people were not to touch the holy things of God. Sin cost Uzzah his life.

In Leviticus 10:1-2 we read about Nadab and Abihu, who offered “profane fire” to the Lord “which He had not commanded them.” What happened? Fire rained down from Heaven and consumed them. Their sin cost them their lives.

Think about Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament. They could have done what they wished with the money they obtained by selling a piece of land. They could have made any choice they wanted. But they chose to lie to the Holy Spirit, and agreed together to do that. As a result, both of them were slain by God. Sin cost them physically.

Think about what sexual pleasure and lust have cost people today. Think about AIDS, STDs, and the number of people's lives that have been ruined by sin. Think about the number of alcoholics who have liver disease or who have heart problems. Think about those who use tobacco—and the lip cancer or lung cancer with which they are afflicted. Think about the number of drunk drivers who have killed people on our highways. Why are these things happening? They are happening because of sin. Sin costs people their physical health.

What are we to do with our bodies? We are not to give them over to sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we are told,

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

Our bodies and spirits are to be used for Christ's glory. They no longer belong to us so that we can use them as we please. Thus, we must not give ourselves over to lives of sin.

Sin also can cost us our families and our friends. Think about the marriage relationships that have been destroyed because a husband or a wife violated the holy bond of matrimony and committed adultery. Think about the children who have suffered because of that. The Bible says that “marriage is honorable, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Sin can cost us our families. Think about what sin cost the first family. In Genesis 3 we see Adam and Eve deciding to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God commanded them not to eat. As a result, sin entered their family and they were cast from the Garden of Eden. They had to work by the sweat of their brows, and their sin greatly affected them.

Think about how pornography has affected the family today. In Matthew 5:26-32 Jesus clearly taught that we are not to look at a woman to lust after her, or we will be guilty of committing adultery in our hearts. Think about the number of homes, relationships, and children who have been hurt because of pornography. Think about the number of children who are being reared by someone else because mom and dad couldn't get their lives right and because they allowed sin to enslave them and use them. As a result, they cannot give their lives to God or to their families because they have been entrapped in their sins and cannot seem to let them go. Thus, sin affects the Christian family. We need to realize that sin will cost us friends and family. We must not get involved in lives of sin. We are to be examples to believers rather than getting caught up in sin. We are to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mt. 5:6). Notice what the apostle Paul said that our attitudes and mindsets should be toward sin: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph. 5:11). We are not to fellowship sin. We are not to have anything to do with it. Instead, we are to expose sin.

Finally, let's think about one tragic cost of sin with which most people do not want to deal. Sin will cause us to spend eternity in Hell. We do not like to think about Hell. We live in a world that would rather forget about Hell. But if we are going to live lives of sin, then we need to think about the consequences of such a life. Let me remind you of two men who are mentioned in Luke 16:19-31. There was a poor man named Lazarus who was a beggar, and who sat at the foot of the rich man's table eating the crumbs that fell to the floor as the dogs licked his sores. The rich man is bound up in sin, and is suffering the costs of

sin even though he appears as if he is living sumptuously. He is rich and “has it all.” He is clothed in fine linen, and he lives luxuriously every day. Both men die. Then their roles are reversed. The rich man is now in torment in Hades. He cries out to God, “Give me just one drop of water because I am tormented in these flames!” Lazarus, however, is on the other side and is being taken care of by God in Paradise. Wouldn’t it be horrible to remain in a life of sin and wind up like the rich man who lost his soul in Hell? Jesus described Hell in Mark 9:44 as a place where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” The word for “worm” would be our word for “maggot.” What is Hell like? It is a place where there are continually maggots eating on our flesh, and no one ever reaches over and turns down the thermostat. Hell is eternal torment. In Revelation 20:14-15 we are told that if we go to Hell, there will be no getting out of it. In Matthew 25 Jesus described it as a place of “outer darkness” where there is the absence of light forever. Can you imagine that? It is a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8). In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said, “These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” Heaven will be eternal life. Hell will be everlasting punishment. Hell is the end result of having live a life of sin. Friend, you do not want to go to Hell, I can promise you. Thus, you do not want to live a life of sin.

Now, let’s think about this from a different aspect. I know what sin will cost us. What did sin cost Jesus? Sin cost Him the most. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we are told, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Jesus was in the very place we all want to go—Heaven. He left the glory of Heaven, came to this Earth, lived as a pauper, and died for humankind. He gave up everything. John 3:16 shows us what sin cost God: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son....”

Take your mind back to the events recorded in Matthew 27. Jesus was in the Praetorium. They placed a crown of thorns on His head, and struck Him on the head with a rod, crushing thorns into His brow. They hit Him in the face. They spit on Him and mocked Him. They used a cat-o’-nine-tails in which were embedded pieces of bone, glass, rocks, and metal, and beat Him on His back repeatedly. Then they put a robe on Him and made fun of Him. You can imagine how the dried blood would adhere to the robe. Then they took off the robe, and the pain started all over again. They took Him up the hill to Golgotha. They nailed His hands and feet to a Roman cross. Jesus then hung there in agony, struggling for each breath until He says, “It is finished.” In 1 Peter 2:24 we read, “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.” Jesus is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins (1 Jn. 2:1-2). Notice what Isaiah said 750 years before Christ regarding the cost of sin to the Savior. In Isaiah 53:3-5 Isaiah said that Christ would be

“despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

When we are tempted by sin and the lust of the flesh, what is one thing that can help us overcome such temptations? We can stop and think about all that God did for us, all that it cost Jesus, and how much sin hurts God. Hebrews 10:26-28 tells us that when we commit sin, we put Jesus to open shame. We trample upon the Son of God, and fail to take advantage of His great sacrifice.

Are you living a life of sin today? Do you realize what sin will cost you? There will be no good to come from living a life of sin. If you are honest with yourself, you know today that "the way of the transgressor is hard." Why not let go of that life? Why not decide today that you will give up a life of sin and then do whatever it takes to get right with God and obey the Gospel?

Maybe you're wondering, "What do I need to do to be saved? What can I do to overcome a life of sin?" You must hear God's Word. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." You must recognize that the Bible is God's message for us today. Then you must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins." You must recognize that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Him" (Jn. 14:6). Then you must be willing to repent. That means that you turn from sin and turn to God (Lk. 13:3). Then you must make the good confession, as is taught in Romans 10:10—"With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Then you must be baptized in water to have your sins washed away. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:15). Have you obeyed the Gospel? Have you let go of your life of sin? If not, we beg you today to think about the cost of sin to you and to the Savior. Then, determine today that you will rid your life of sin, live for Jesus, and to go the beautiful place called Heaven. We hope and pray that you will do that today as we study the Gospel of Christ together.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE HIGH COST OF SIN”

1. In Psalm 38:4 what did David have to say about his own sins?
2. In Ezekiel 18:4, what did the prophet have to say about “the soul who sins”?
3. What type of death is Ezekiel 18:4 discussing?
4. According to 1 John 3:4, what is sin?
5. What does Proverbs 13:15 have to say about “the way of the transgressor”?
6. What does Romans 6:23 say about “the wages of sin”?
7. What important questions did Jesus ask in Mark 8:36-37?
8. According to Isaiah 59:1-2, how does sin affect a person’s relationship with God?
9. According to Habakkuk 1:13, how does God view sin?
10. What does John 9:31 teach that a sinner cannot do?
11. According to Proverbs 28:9, how does God view the prayer of one who lives in sin?
12. According to Psalm 66:18, if a person lives in sin, how will that affect his or her relationship with God?
13. According to Matthew 25:46, what does God have in store for those who do their best to live sin-free lives and who thus remain faithful to Him?
14. According to Matthew 25:46, what does God have in store for those who live in sin?
15. In Leviticus 10:1-2, what did Nadab and Abihu do that caused their deaths?
16. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, how does God want us to live our lives?
17. Instead of living in sin, what, according to Matthew 5:6, does God want us to do?
18. According to Ephesians 5:11, what should be our relationship with “the unfruitful works of darkness”?
19. In Mark 9:44, how did Jesus describe Hell?
20. What does 2 Corinthians 8:9 tell us about the sacrifice that Jesus Himself made on our behalf to help us live free from sin and inherit eternal life?
21. What does 1 Peter 2:24 tell us about what Christ did for us to free us from sin?
22. If a person wants to obey the Gospel and become a Christian, what must he or she do to accomplish that?