

# The Threefold Sin of Society

by Harold Vaughan

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*The sermon argues that the root of all problems in society is a wrong understanding of God, which leads to humanizing God, deifying man, and minimizing sin.*

**Duration:** 44:18

**Scripture:** Job 15:14-16, Isaiah 6:3, Matthew 10:28, Romans 1:21-23

**Topics:** "Sin"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the decline of integrity and morality in society, specifically in the United States. He emphasizes the importance of understanding one's culture and family through the lens of Romans chapter one. The speaker highlights the threefold sin of society, which includes not glorifying God, lack of gratitude, and idolatry. He also mentions the negative influences on children, such as treating them as pets, daycare centers, excessive television consumption, and virtual worlds. The sermon encourages confession of sins, thanksgiving to God, and intercession as a way to address and overcome these societal challenges.

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## Transcript

For the life of me, I can't understand what could have gone wrong in Littleton, Colorado. If only the parents had kept their children away from the guns, we wouldn't have had such a tragedy. Yea, it must have been the guns.

It couldn't have been because of half of our children are being raised in broken homes. It couldn't have been because our children get to spend an average of 30 seconds in meaningful conversation with their parents each day. After all, we give our children quality time.

It couldn't have been because we treat our children as pets and our pets as children. It couldn't have been because we place our children in daycare centers where they learn socialization skills among their peers under the law of the jungle, while employees who have no vested interest in the children look on and make sure that no blood is spilled. It couldn't have been because we allow our children to watch, on average, seven hours of television a day filled with the glorification of sex and violence that isn't fit for adult consumption.

It couldn't have been because we allow or even encourage our children to enter into virtual worlds in which, in order to win the game, one must kill as many opponents as possible in the most sadistic way

possible. It couldn't have been because we have sterilized and contraceptive our families down to sizes so small that the children we do have are so spoiled with material things that they come to equate the receiving of material with love. It couldn't have been because our children, who historically have been seen as a blessing from God, are now viewed as either a mistake created when contraception fails or inconveniences that parents try to raise in their spare time.

It couldn't have been because we give two-year prison sentences to teenagers who kill their newborns. It couldn't have been because our school systems teach the children that they are nothing but glorified apes who have evolutionized out of some primordial soup of mud. It couldn't have been because we teach our children that there are no laws of morality that transcend us, that everything is relative and that actions don't have consequences.

What's the big deal? The president gets away with it. Nah, it must have been the guns. I don't think anybody could have said it any better.

And the question before us tonight is how did we get to the place we are as a society? What has put our country and our nation in an absolute moral freefall? What has brought about the wholesale decline of integrity in the United States of America? I believe the answer is in perhaps the most relevant chapter of the Bible, Romans chapter 1. And I invite your attention to Romans chapter 1 this evening. I do not believe that you can understand your nation. I do not understand that you can believe your culture, understand your culture.

I do not think that you can understand your family or yourself apart from Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1 and verse 21. Romans chapter 1 and verse 21. Note carefully the word of God.

Because that when they knew God, not knew about God, but when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. Neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

I want to speak to you tonight on the subject, the three-fold sin of society. The three-fold sin of society. And the three-fold sin of society tonight is laid out in Romans chapter 1. It's the sin of humanizing God, the sin of deifying man, and the sin of minimizing sin.

I want you to note first of all tonight, according to our text, how they humanized God, how they downsized God. The Bible says here that they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. I believe that the root of all problems is a wrong understanding of God.

One man said every problem in life is theological. Every problem in life is theological. It's either an ignorance or a misunderstanding about God.

And here we find that they changed, they really didn't change the glory of God, but they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image made like to corruptible man. In other words, they brought God down to a human level. They were guilty of downsizing God, of remaking God.

One man said that in the beginning, God created man in His own image. And ever since the fall, man has tried to return the favor. You know, Orthodox Jews have such a deep respect for Yahweh that they won't even take that name, that sacred name, upon their lips.

But here in pagan America, we have the audacity to reimage, to reimagine, to remake God in our own likeness. You say, how is it that man humanized God? How is it that societies and peoples bring God down and humanize God? Well, first of all, men seek to humanize God by attempting to dethrone God. By attempting to dethrone God.

You recall how that Satan, he sought to dislodge God as the center of the universe. How that Lucifer, son of the morning, he sought to displace God as the sovereign king of the universe. In Isaiah chapter 14, he said these words.

He said, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the throne of God. I will sit in the mount of the congregation.

He said, I will be like the Most High. Satan seeking to divert the worship that should be going to God, to divert that worship to himself. We see it in the wilderness temptation.

When He took our Lord Jesus Christ up on an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said, all these kingdoms will I give unto you if you will but fall down and worship me. Dear people, Satan is not alone in this attempt to dethrone God. But man now is teamed up with the enemy in a joint conspiracy to get God off the throne.

Let me say loud and clear to you tonight, dear people, and I hope you understand this. I'm sure you do here in this church. All churches are not the same.

And we're living in a day when we've grown so accustomed to the brand, anemic brand of Christianity in America that nobody makes any distinctions between anything. A.W. Tozer said our religion today is so watered down. Our Christianity is so watered down.

If it was poison, it wouldn't hurt anybody. And if it was medicine, it wouldn't help anybody. And I want to tell you that liberal theology is nothing more than an attempt to get God off the throne.

This assault on the integrity of the word of God. You know, they come up with these things every other week. Somebody comes up with something new.

Now they have one they'll call the Jesus Seminar going around the nation here. And what they're seeking to do in the Jesus Seminar is to advance a view of the historical Jesus, it says here, stripped of all the divine elements. Now what they're trying to do here, listen to what they're saying.

They're saying Jesus probably did not create the Lord's Prayer or teach it to His disciples. Jesus did not publicly proclaim Himself to be the Messiah. It would be interesting to find out what version they've got a hold of to come to these conclusions.

Jesus, while on the cross, probably did not speak the words asking God to forgive His persecutors. Now listen to this right here. Dr. Funk, that's the guy's name that's in charge.

That's an appropriate name, don't you think? Dr. Funk. He said they hope to publish a Jesus Bible, a Jesus Bible, with the authentic sayings of Jesus in red ink, the inauthentic in black, and perhaps the gradations between in pink and gray. Now my brethren, I just want to say to you tonight that this kind of silliness and all of these different... I went in the Christian bookstore the other day, they ought to put another name on that too.

But brother, this is nothing less than an attempt to get God off the throne. A famous Georgia personality by the name of Jimmy Carter has fallen out with God because of his harshness. His harshness, it says here, in that he ordered in the Old Testament his people to destroy entire villages with their livestock.

My dear people, all of these things coming down to cast a bad light upon God is nothing other than an attempt to dethrone God and get God off the throne and dehumanize God. I'll tell you, evolution is nothing more than a convenient way to get rid of God. Theistic evolution, you know, it doesn't get rid of God entirely, but it merely reduces God from being a major player to a helpless bystander.

And I want to tell you that I know that you believe that God created the world in seven days. He spoke it into existence. There is no theistic evolution of any sort, brother, if there's been anything.

It's a devolution ever since sin came into the world. The people who love Mother Earth, their problem is they hate Father God. It's a convenient way to get rid of God.

Nothing more than an attempt to dethrone God. But another way that men humanize God is by stripping God of His unappealing attributes. By seeking to strip God of His unappealing attributes.

You know, today's preaching in America, by and large, cautiously avoids those aspects of God's character that would bring guilt to the human heart. The church today emphasizes the same attributes of God that the world emphasizes. And the comfortable God of popular Christianity, the reason He's so popular is because He can do nothing to you, He can only do something for you.

The pulpits of America have become more therapeutic than prophetic. In Christ's name, where are the prophets of God that can thunder out, my friend, not only the comforting truths of the Word of God, but the threatening terrors of the Lord. You know, our God today is kind of like when you go to Kmart and they give the little kids one of those smiley faces.

I think that's the conception of God we have in America. He's a Wal-Mart smiley face God. He's just an abstract blob of sentiment.

He's not anything that's awful, that's personal or anything. He's an abstract blob of sentiment that you can just snuggle up to whenever and wherever you want to. He's a toothless and accommodating God we have today, stripping God of His unappealing attributes.

I'll tell you a way that men seek to strip God of His unappealing attributes is by a denial of the majesty of God. A denial of the majesty of God. We are a generation that knows not God.

We're living in a day when we're playing marbles with diamonds. We have t-shirt Christianity. God is awesome.

You know, you see that on somebody's t-shirt, you know, or bumper sticker. God is awesome. Well, the word awesome means abject terror.

It's interesting today speaking at Georgia Tech and talking to some of the students there to get some of the ideas of some of these students. I'll tell you something, friend. We're living in a day when there is no fear of God before their eyes.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said these words, Before thine ever blazing throne, we have no luster of our own. My dear people, a denial of the majesty of God. But number two, a disowning of the holiness of God.

The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. The word holy means morally pure. The word holy means not common, not casual.

The word holy means He's not like us. And I believe that holiness is the attribute of attributes. God is love, but it's a holy love.

God is merciful, but it's a holy mercy. God is just, but it's a holy justice. You know, when we want to emphasize something in our day, we put it in bold letters or we underline it.

But when a Jew wanted to emphasize something, he repeated it. He emphasized it by repeating it. And the Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy.

The Bible never says that God is love, love, love. The Bible never says that God is nice, nice, nice. The Bible never says that God is peace, peace, peace.

But the Bible does say that God is holy, holy, holy. Third degree holiness tonight, men and women, concerning our Creator God. I'll tell you another way of stripping God of His unappealing attributes is this matter of disowning the holiness of God.

But there's another way in which men seek to humanize God. And that is by eliminating the fear of God. By eliminating the fear of God.

Jesus said, do not fear them which can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But He said, I will tell you whom you shall fear. Fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

That's what Jesus said. That's what Jesus said. Eliminating the fear of God.

We've heard many sermons on the second coming. We've heard some sermons on the second birth. But how often do we hear messages on the second death? You know, in listening to popular preaching, you get the idea that God is too good to send men to hell.

And men are too good for God to send to hell. And listening to popular teachers, brother, you get the idea that somehow hell has disappeared. I was in Michigan and a man came to me in one service and he said he was weeping on Sunday morning after the service.

And he said, Harold, I want to tell you that I used to think that God would never send anybody to hell. But he said, now I've got a lot to think about. I said, sir, you have a whole lot to think about.

Why don't you go home and consider this matter before God? And he came to several services before he and his family gave their hearts to Jesus Christ. You see, we eliminate the fear of God by emphasizing what God can do for us, but never mentioning what God can do to us. Humanizing God by eliminating the fear of God.

But also humanizing God by thinking of God in human terms. Thinking that God is just one of us. Thinking of God in human terms.

Dear people, Jesus is more than a bridge over troubled waters. And I believe the problem is we get to the point where we imagine that God is just like us. They change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.

In other words, God is just a big version of us. And a man-sized God will elicit no dread and no fear. You know, when you go to McDonald's and place your order, what do they say about every time anymore? Do you want to supersize it? Do you want to supersize it? You know what that means? You get more of the junk that you were going to get in the first place.

You just get a bigger dose of it, brother. Do you want to supersize it? Would you like more of this trash? Would you like for us to supersize it for 39 cents? That's what they're telling you. And I believe the God of popular Christianity is little more than a supersized man.

A supersized man. But the God of the Bible is immense. He's an immense God.

You know, they tell us it would take hundreds of light years just to travel from one side of the Milky Way to the other, much less the universe that's ever expanding. They can't get a read on it, you know. He's an immense God because the Bible says the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee.

I went out in Illinois and looked over on the horizon. I was out praying before service one night. It was one of those nights when the moon hung on the horizon.

One of those nights when it was really big. You know, some nights the moon is huge. It was one of those nights.

And you could see the craters and the man's face in the moon and the whole thing was a full moon. And I began to look at that moon and I began to think, wait a minute, I'm talking to the one that put that moon out there. I had some conception of the vastness, the immensity of God and the smallest of myself as I was praying there that night.

The God of the Bible is holy. He's immense. He's transcendent.

Oh, dear people, the Bible says in the book of Psalms, listen to this commentary. Listen, just don't look, just listen to this. Psalm 50, Thou givest Thy mouth, Thy mouth to evil.

The Bible says, Thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against Thy brother. Thou slanderest Thine own mother's son.

These sins of the tongue slanderer. These things Thou hast done and I kept silent. Now listen to this.

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such and one as Thyself. Why are they slandering? Why are they committing these evils? Because they thought that God was just like them. Brother, this business of humanizing God is nothing unique to our day.

The Bible says in the book of Hosea, God said, I am God and not man. The Holy One in the midst of thee. A.W. Tozer penned these words, All that God is, He's always been.

And all that He's always been, He will ever be. Nothing that God has ever said about Himself will ever be modified. Nothing that the inspired prophets and apostles have said about God will ever be rescinded.

Brother, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. They humanized God. They brought God down.

And second of all, they deified man. They propped man up. Look in verse 25, if you would, in Romans chapter 1. Notice what it says here.

Verse 25, He changed the truth of God into a lie. And again, you can't change the truth of God, but you can exchange the truth of God for a lie. And notice this, They worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.

Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator. The object of worship to change from God to man. They brought God down.

They propped man up. You know, it used to be that we would sing, and we still do, How great thou art. Some congregations ought to start singing, How great we are.

How about my Jesus, I love me. Because now we're taught, well, you've got to love yourself. And boy, if you don't love yourself, then you can't love anybody else.

And you've got to forgive yourself. Brother, let me tell you something. Let me tell you something.

It's impossible for you to forgive yourself because you don't have the authority to forgive yourself. And only God can forgive sin. But we're playing God in the churches of America tonight.

Deifying man. Dylan said everybody's got to serve somebody. Boy, if we don't serve God, we'll serve ourselves.

Are we not living in a day of self-centeredness? Self-absorption, self-esteem. You know, this exaltation of self, brother, it's like we've got a God complex here in America. I'm the captain of my faith.

I'm the master of my soul. You go in the grocery store, and there it is staring in your face, in the face in the checkout line, Self Magazine. Self Magazine.

Don't leave a whole lot of room to wonder about the contents. Self Magazine, published by Gloria Steinem. Listen to Gloria Steinem's quote years ago.

Maybe she's a prophet after all. She said, by the year 2000, we will have taught our children to believe in themselves, not God. I think she was right.

We were witnessing down in the Roanoke city market, in the center of the square in Roanoke, and my boys were doing paint boards, and there were hecklers coming by, and people were preaching, and there was one guy that wanted to argue and wanted to debate, and I went over to talk to him, and he said, I'm an atheist. I don't believe in God. I said, well, what do you believe in? He said, I believe in myself.

I said, well, man, I gave up on that a long time ago. I met a young man today, an Asian student over at the Georgia Tech University. He said, I'm a believer.

He said, I don't believe in God. I'm an atheist. I said, well, God doesn't believe in atheists.

It didn't slow him down. He kept on going anyhow. But dear people, have we come to a point where self has so become the center of the universe? I think our nation has.

I think our nation has. The Humanist Manifesto, number one, says these words, we can discover no divine providence. We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species.

No deity will save us. We must save ourselves. Listen to this.

Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. Humanist Manifesto, number two. Listen to this.

And we're already in the middle of it. Here's what they predicted when they wrote it. The next century can and should be the humanist century.

Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our lifespan, significantly modify our behavior and alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life. Shocking arrogance. Shocking arrogance.

My brothers and my sisters tonight, this exaltation of self is not limited to the educational world or to corrupt politics, but the exaltation of man has now filtered down into the church. How often do we hear talk about the great men of God and how little talk do we hear about the great God of men? One of the reformers said, if the church of Christ, if the worship of God is not central in church services, the church will become a personality cult. And I want to tell you something, friend.

Christianity is not centered around anybody or any program. It's centered around the Lord Jesus Christ. My wife and I visited a church in South Boston, Virginia, near where I grew up.

We wanted to check this thing out. We got in, got a bulletin, and on the front of the bulletin it said if you came to their church, they would help you feel better about yourself. My friend, is that what really, a man living in adultery, is that really what he needs is to help him feel better about himself? Is that the greatest need of the human race? I ask you, is that it? Oh, man-centered Christianity.

Went to the Christian bookstore the other day and was just looking through the Bibles and over there they got a self-help Bible. If you know anything about Christianity, you know you're beyond self-help. What you need is God's mercy.

That's what we need. Life recovery Bible. Well, brother, I think the King James Version is a life recovery Bible.

A living Bible. Here it is. KJV.

It's a living Bible, brother. I mean, it's the Word of God, is it not? I don't want to get off on that, but brother, this whole idea of just adjusting even the Word of God to make designer Bibles. Oh, brother, that fellow out there in California in the Glass Palace said that the worst thing you could ever do is tell a man he's a sinner, because if you tell him that, it might ruin his self-esteem.

You don't need a Bible to go to that church. All you need is a mirror to go to worship. Self-exaltation is always the move of Satan.

Listen, pride is not just thinking that we're better than others. Pride is thinking we're better than we really are. You know, the Bible is very plain in very plain telling us that we are not good people who happen to do some bad things, but the human race is a race of people who are sinners through and through.

But the ultimate evil today in today's religiosity is no longer sin, but it's a lack of success or a lack of happiness or a lack of self-acceptance. We hear things today like we're just little gods and we're evolving

into a big god and we can order angels around. And we hear stuff about the permissive will of God and the perfect will of God.

Let me just say something to you this evening. When it comes to moral issues, there's no such thing as the permissive will of God. When it comes to moral issues, you're either in the will of God or you're out of the will of God.

But we dumb down the theology. Why? To accommodate our ideas. Discerning the will of God today has just been reduced to discovering what God thinks about my own plans.

I believe God's got a plan for every human being. Young people, I believe that every one of you singing in this auditorium, God has a unique plan and a unique design for your life. And it's your business to fall in line and find out that will of God and live it to the hilt from now until Jesus comes.

The Bible says that a man's pride will bring him low. What an inflated view of self we have in these days. Let me give you a text out of Job chapter 15.

Listen to this. Listen to the Word of God. It says, It is what is man that he should be clean.

And he which is born of woman, that he should be righteous. Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints. Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.

How much more abominable and filthy is man which drinketh iniquity like water. So much for you're okay, I'm okay. Brethren, there was a humanizing of God, a bringing God down.

There was a deification of man, a worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator. But the third thing that happened here in this text was the minimization of sin. And I want you to see it there in verse 29 of Romans chapter 1. The minimization of sin.

Verse 29, Romans 1. Now here they've humanized God. They brought God down. They deified man.

They propped man up. But notice the third thing. They minimized sin.

Verse 29. Being filled with all unrighteousness. Filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without natural understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.

Who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Filled. Filled with this tragic, tragic list of sins.

You know the Bible says that there's a generation that is clean in their own eyes, yet they're not washed from their own filthiness. You know brothers and sisters, we have now come to a point where the basic underlying attitude is that God is not all that holy, man is not all that sinful, and sin is not all that serious, so what's the big deal anyhow? What's the big deal anyhow? Minimizing. Minimizing sin.

I want to tell you tonight that God has a zero tolerance for sin. It only took one sin for the Creator to cast Adam and Eve out of His presence forever. Dear people, God takes sin serious.

But here in America, we have witnessed, we have witnessed the minimization of sin. It started in the 1950s where there was a stripping of innocence. A stripping of innocence.

When rock music came on the scene and vulgar sensuality began to take place. A stripping of innocence. Then during the 1960s, we witnessed the stripping of authority.

Where it became fashionable to rebel and the college campuses went up in smoke and the parents became old men and old women and the police became pigs. A stripping of authority. Then in the 1970s as a nation, we witnessed the stripping of morality with the sexual revolution.

The stripping of morality. And now in the 1990s, we have lived to witness the stripping of our national integrity. And you understand that the reason that sin is not taken serious is because God is not taken serious.

And the reason that sin does not appear to be sinful is because the vision of God has faded. We have a weakened conception of God. And our vision of God is so low that things don't look black and white anymore.

They're just kind of pale shades of gray. And the farther we get from the light of God, the easier it is to get used to the dark. We have a low view of God.

Why? And it results in the minimizing of sin. The minimizing of sin. Well, how do we minimize sin? Well, by rationalizing sin.

Rationalizing sin. Well, nobody's perfect, you know. Nobody's perfect.

Renaming sin. I was counseling a fellow one time. He came all four hours down to see me.

I don't know why he came. And wanted to get some counsel. And then his wife wrote back later and said that I didn't do anything to help him.

I knew that. A thing is to help a man. There ain't a whole lot men can do for you anyway.

And by the way, I think we put too much stock in counselors. We better get back to the point where we get face to face with God and get our help from Him. Amen.

I know there's some wisdom in helping a multitude of counselors. But brother, we put too much stock in this. So she wrote me back and said, well, my husband went to a Christian psychological outfit.

They'll help you out if you got about \$20,000 insurance money. And he got helped out and found out, discovered, they discovered that he had, quote, intermittent explosive disorder. That's what the letter said.

What? Intermittent explosive disorder. You know what the translation is? He's a big spiritual baby that has temper tantrums. That's what that means.

He doesn't need dope. He needs to repent. The answer is not the couch.

The answer is the cross. But we minimize sin by rationalizing sin. Absolutely amazing.

You know, the second of all, by redefining sin, redefining sin. Boy, we're experts at this in these days. You know, you hear talk about, well, shortcomings and mistakes and failures and weaknesses and inherited

traits.

Anything but sin. You know, sin is no longer that which offends God, but sin is that which offends us. A fellow told me the other day he was explained in a certain situation.

He said, well, you know, so and so, he got with the wrong crowd. That's why he went down the tubes. Got with the wrong crowd.

Well, we are the wrong crowd until we get born again. And you don't need to get with the wrong crowd. You are the wrong crowd.

And the world is not the problem, brother. The world is in our hearts until God roots it out by His grace and by His mercy. Let's don't blame the environment.

Let's don't blame society. Let's quit blaming somebody else. Let's take a little responsibility before our Creator in these days.

You know, if it doesn't affect our reputation in the eyes of men, well, it really can't be all that bad. You know, the only problem with this view is we don't consider how our sin grieves and offends and hurts our Holy Heavenly Father. I believe that no sin-excusing doctrine is God-honoring.

And we got all these sin-excusing doctrines. Dear brothers and sisters, an inferior view of God has caused a wrong view of sin. And the man that has light thoughts of sin has never had high thoughts of God.

Brother, I'll tell you something, when the gospel will mean something, it will mean something when people understand that they've broken the laws of a holy God. And then you can pour out Christ and point to a fountain filled with blood. And brother, sinners can run, thank God, and find refuge.

And there's forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared, the Bible says. Hallelujah for the mercy. But brother, what about this redefining sin? You know, I saw one the other day where they now have the Christian moviegoers guide.

God help us. Christian moviegoers guide. They're going to tell you up front how many curse words, how many times they take God's name in vain, how many four-letter words are used.

And then they're going to tell you how many scenes of immorality are going to be in the film up front. So you'll know which one you can... You can determine how much sin you can stand before you go. You know what I had a man tell me? He had a son in a Christian school.

He said, Harold, I'm taking my son now to R-rated movies because when he grows up and graduates from high school and goes off to college, I don't want him to go hog-wild and rebel. Give him a little marijuana so he won't get the heroin. Is that what you're going to do? Give him a Budweiser so he won't get the Jack Daniel? Give him a little R-rated so he won't go for the triple X? What kind of an inability to discern do we have in these days? I want to tell you young people, you have a very unusual setting here where your mother and father have a heart for God and they want to shield you from the trash that a lot of them went through and you ought to be thankful to God that you've grown up in an environment where your parents care enough to try to steer you in the right direction.

Oh, I'll tell you, redefining sin, rationalizing sin, but I'll tell you another way of minimizing sin and that's by underestimating the blackness of the human heart. Hang with me on this point. Underestimating the

blackness of the human heart.

I was up in Ohio in a prayer meeting one night and a lady said this. She said, I want you to pray for me that God would help me overcome my little sins. My little sins.

I sat there and I thought, I wonder how little they were when Christ suffered the judgment of God on the cross for those little sins. There's no such thing as a little sin. No such thing as a little sin.

You know what A.W. Tozer, that modern prophet said, he said, I've seen a lot of horrible things in my life. He lived to be 63 years old. He said, I've seen a lot of tragic things.

But he said, I want to tell you the worst thing I ever saw was when God showed me my own heart. I wonder, dear people tonight, have you ever had dealings with a holy God to the point where you begin to see that your main problem was not wrong doing, but wrong being? I was talking to a man about his soul and he said this to me. He said, well, you know, as a young person, as a teenager, I got involved and did some wrong things.

And to him, sin was nothing more than some outward things that he happened to get engaged in. Brother, I want to tell you that sin is not really primarily wrong doing. It's wrong being.

Oswald Chambers says that conviction of sin is the rarest thing that ever strikes a man. It's the rarest thing that ever strikes a man. We used to have revival prayer meetings in our crusades back in the early days about 15 years ago.

And we get the people into the meeting and I'd get up in the pulpit and preach the sermon as quick as I could because I wanted to get into the prayer meeting because I knew if anything's going to happen is going to happen in a prayer meeting. And I'd get up and preach the sermon quickly. And then I'd say to the people, we're going to have a prayer meeting, but don't come unless you're willing to confess and forsake every known sin.

And I'd spend 15 minutes discouraging anybody from coming to the prayer meeting trying to talk them out of it because I didn't want the guys who were going to come in and say the same thing they've been saying for the last 20 years. I wanted some guys who were going to come in and pour their hearts out to God. And you know what would happen? Amazingly, we'd have people that would come anyway after all that discouragement not to come and warning.

And they would come. And we'd get in there and we'd confess our sins to God and I'd lead out and they were so stunned that an evangelist would have any sins. You know what they used to say to me? We're surprised.

We didn't think you guys had any sense to confess. And boy, when they found out what a sinner I was, I guess that liberated them to let the can out of the bag. They weren't all that good either.

And brother, we began to really pour our hearts out to God. I remember we were in Belleville, West Virginia one time. And it's about... You know, when we used to go to these prayer meetings, we didn't go for 30 minutes, brother.

We would go for 3, 4, sometimes 5, 5 hours of prayer. And we got in one one night. I got all the guys kind of laying on their stomachs like in a huddle with all the heads pointed in, you know, in a big circle.

And here we are on our stomachs laying on the floor. You can't kneel for 4 or 5 hours, brother. Even if you're 29, you can't kneel for 4 or 5 hours, I'll tell you that.

And I said to the man, I said, man, first thing we're gonna do is we're gonna confess our sins to God. I said, second thing we're gonna do after we finish that, we'll do that as long as it takes and then we're gonna thank God. We're not gonna ask anything, we're just gonna thank.

And then after we thanked and praised the Lord, then we're gonna bring our petitions to the Lord and have some intercession. But we're gonna do it in that order. And they went for it.

And we launched out, brother, in confession of sin. And that thing went on for about an hour and a half or two hours. And I remember laying on the floor there that night.

And it was like God peeled off the blinders. It was like God took the scales off our eyes. And laying there that night and whenever somebody would confess a sin, I was guilty of it as well and so was the rest of us.

It was like God piercing our hearts. We were having some deep dealings with God and we were having. And I remember laying there on the pavement there that night and I said, Oh God, no. And it almost got to the point where God, please, no, nothing more.

God, don't show us anything else. God. And it was like God peeled back the veil and showed the utter wretchedness of our own hearts before God.

I'm telling you, it was one of the most crushing, devastating senses that I've ever had in my entire Christian experience. Dear people, I wonder this evening, I wonder this evening, have we underestimated the blackness of the human heart? But I'll tell you another way in which men minimize sin and that's by downplaying sin's consequences. Downplaying sin's consequences.

W.C. Fields, he was a, he was a huckster, you know, a famous comedian of another century. He had this image as a huckster and one day, one of his friends found him poring over the Bible like his life depended on it. And his friend was shocked and he said to W.C. Fields, he said, What in the world are you doing reading the Bible? And W.C. Fields characteristically said, Looking for loopholes.

Looking for loopholes. And I wonder, brethren in the church, if we've not created a man-centered theology that provides a loophole and a let off for every conceivable sin. You know, God is viewed as some sort of a sentimental granddaddy.

He's up there in a rocking chair somewhere, kind of like an Aladdin, a spiritual Aladdin. You know, he jumps out of the lamp and comes and does what we want him to do. Some sort of a bell hop.

And you know, sin's not taken seriously in the average church. And you know how you can tell it? Because we downplayed the consequences of sin. Consider, consider the weekly prayer meeting.

No, no, no. Not W-E-E-K. W-E-A-K.

Weekly. Very weak. Very weak.

Most places. You know why? God said He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. But if people don't believe that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, then they will not seek Him because they do not think that God is telling the truth.

What about fruit bearing? The Bible says we're all going to stand before God and give an account of the things we've done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. And you know in a lot of places it doesn't bother the people at all if we're not bearing any fruit for God. Why? Because we think that God is telling us a fable.

We really don't believe that we're really going to give an account to God. I want to tell you, friend, the judgment seat of Christ is more than an awards podium. Yes, there will be awards, but it is a judgment seat.

A steward is accountable to his master, is he not? But we come up with these man-centered theologies. Jesus cursed the barren fig tree. He cursed the barren fig tree.

There was no fruit, nothing but leaves. What about rebellion? You know, this is taken so lightly in most places. I go to churches all the time, you know, where they still believe in dating.

Lord, help us. People get hooked up and unequally yoked to unsaved people. Well, certainly God really didn't mean that we shouldn't be unequally yoked.

And they come up with all these clever explanations that God really didn't mean we're going to reap what we sow. You know, we talk about Satan's attack on the home. So we got a 60% divorce rate.

Divorce is really no big thing. In fact, today in Bible-believing Baptist churches, you can be in the process of leaving your mate and be dating the guy in the choir and the church will not say one thing about it. Don't tell me that's Christianity, men and women.

Don't tell me that's Bible-believing Christianity. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Oh, my brethren, we've got such a man-centered view of salvation in these days. What about disrespect toward parents? Even in the best of churches, you see disrespect for parents.

Listen to this. You shall fear every man, his mother and father, and keep the Sabbath because I am the Lord your God. Children, obey your parents in the Lord.

It's the first command with promise that thou mayest live long on the earth. You say, well, God really didn't mean my life would be cut short prematurely and cut off if I disobeyed my parents. That's exactly what God meant.

That's exactly what God meant. Such disobedience and disrespect. Oh, brethren, rebellions, that's the sin of witchcraft.

What about lukewarmness? Not taken very seriously. Not taken very seriously. We're not all that bad.

We're not all that good, brother Harold, but we're not all that bad. We could be a lot worse. We're just kind of not hot.

We're not cold. We're just kind of average. We're just kind of somewhere in the middle.

You know what God said to Laodicea? He said, you're neither hot nor cold. You're lukewarm because you're neither hot nor cold, but you're only lukewarm. I'm going to spew you.

I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth. You say, what does that mean? Brother, if you get vomited out of the mouth of God, that don't sound like a whole lot of salvation in it to me. I'm not being dogmatic here.

But brother, when God, the God of the Bible starts using language like that, we had better back out of the way and understand that God wants His people to be on fire in these latter days. And let's don't blame it on the latter days. Let's don't blame it on the apostasy.

Let's don't blame it on the falling away. Let's don't blame it on the fact that the church is going to go down the tubes. Brother, the true church of Jesus doesn't have to follow the apostates down the tubes back to Rome.

The church came in with a burst of glory. She's going to go out with a blaze. And brother, this Laodicean spirit is indicative of a fact that people don't think that God is telling us the truth that sin is not to be taken seriously.

Because, by the way, we're doing better than most people anyhow. Don't compare yourselves to the other churches around. You've got nothing to compare to.

You better compare yourselves to the standard of the snowy white righteousness of the Son of God Himself. What is lukewarmness? Let's talk about it for a minute. It means the animating spirit is gone.

Hear me. Hang with me. The animating spirit is gone.

When we're lukewarm, there's no conscious touch of God. Brother, there's no sense of the fullness of God. No melting, yearning love for the Savior.

No conscious grasp on the throne of God through prayer. Lukewarmness is not consisting of the grosser, external sins. But lukewarmness consists of

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