

“The Mystery of Iniquity”:

A History of Sin & Satan

Sermon Notes

➤ **The story of humanity is ultimately a tragedy in Adam, but is undeniably a comedy in Christ**

**If we want to glory in the good news of the gospel, we need to...*

1. Understand the essence of our sin (1 John 3:4; Colossians 3:5; James 4:4; Proverbs 24:9; Romans 3:18)
2. Explore the entrance of our sin (Genesis 3:1a; Isaiah 14:12-19; Ezekiel 28:12-18; Luke 10:18; 1 Timothy 3:6; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7-9)
3. Appreciate the effects of our sin (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12, 15, 16, 18, 19; Isaiah 59:2; Romans 1:18; 3:10-11; 6:23a; Ephesians 2:1-3)
4. Evaluate the extent of our sin (Romans 3:10-18; 3:23)
5. Embrace emancipation from our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 1:15; Mark 2:17; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 6:23)

Next Week: Genesis 3:1b-5 - “Talking With the Tempter”

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of September 21st-27th

Getting Started

1. Pastors and churches can sometimes be hesitant to preach (or listen to preaching) on sin. Though it may seem obvious, what are some reasons that one might be reluctant to touch on this theme (or to listen to preaching on this theme) from the pulpit?

Digging Deeper

2. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it's the churches that don't avoid difficult topics and are willing to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) that tend to win and hold people's attention (not to mention *respect*) in the long run. Discuss the following paragraph from Christian author Brett McCracken quoting Charles Spurgeon and see if you agree:

“We’re naturally tempted to hide the various offenses of Christianity, but as Charles Spurgeon notes, we do so at our peril: ‘Hide not the offense of the cross, lest you make it of none effect. The angles and corners of the gospel are its strength: to pare them off is to deprive it of power. Toning down is not the increase of strength, but the death of it.’ We don’t need to tone down Scripture or domesticate the gospel. We need to preach it boldly and comprehensively. The people in our pews don’t want to be sold a sanitized, fake Christianity that conveniently affirms them wherever they are and leaves them unstretched and unshaken. They want the truth—however hard it is to hear.”¹

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<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/pastor-dont-avoid-uncomfortable-topics/>. Accessed 9/19/25 @ 9:30am.

Open Your Bible to 1 John 3:4...

3. What is sin? If you had to define it in one sentence, how would you do it? In one of the tersest definitions of sin in the Bible, the Apostle John says that: "...sin is lawlessness." What does this mean? What kind of lawlessness? Why is this a clarifying way to think of sin? The Bible also describes sin as idolatry (Colossians 3:5), spiritual adultery (James 4:4), and folly (Proverbs 24:9) among other depictions. Why is it important to understand sin through multiple lenses? Which lens is particularly helpful for you? Why?

4. John Piper famously has said that sin is:

"The glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The promises of God not believed. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved."²

At the end of the day, why is it critical that we define sin in relationship to God? Is it not fitting that after one of the most gripping depictions of sin and sinners in the book of Romans that Paul quotes Psalm 36:1 (in Romans 3:17) which says that: "There is no fear of God before their eyes"? How does Piper's multi-layered, God-centered definition of sin above resonate with Paul's concern in Romans 3:10? Do you tend to think of sin (your sin in particular) as a personal affront to God? Why or why not?

5. Where did sin come from? Scripture doesn't provide endless data in answer to this question (which may be a lesson in itself), but it does furnish us with enough information to begin to put the pieces together. Read carefully through the following passages as a group and discuss your findings: Genesis 3:1a; Isaiah 14:12-19; Ezekiel 28:12-18; Luke 10:18; 1 Timothy 3:6; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7-9. Having read and reflected on these verses, what questions remain in your mind about the origin of evil? (*hint*: if you have no further questions, you may not be thinking hard enough)

6. In Article 3 of our EFCA Statement of Faith, we affirm that: “In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath.”³ Walk through these Scriptures in your group, exploring the biblical underpinnings for such an affirmation: Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12, Romans 5:15, 16, 18, 19; Isaiah 59:2; Romans 1:18; 3:10-11; Romans 6:23a; Ephesians 2:1-3. Which of these Scriptures especially grip you? Why?

7. East of Eden, though we continue to be made in the image of God (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9), the Bible teaches that as human beings, our depravity is total. Total depravity doesn’t imply that we are as bad as we can possibly be, but rather that our fallenness extends to every part of who we are as well as to every last one of us. Consider how the Scriptures teach both features of our fallenness in Romans 3:10-18 and 3:23. Why is it essential that people understand this about themselves? What is the danger in developing an identity or self-concept that doesn’t include this kind of radical fallenness?

8. It’s in view of all of the sobering truths we’ve considered so far in this study that we can turn to the good news of the gospel with fresh faith as believers. Take time to savor these Scriptures as a group, praising God for his grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 1:15; Mark 2:17; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 6:23. Which of these truths might serve as the kindling for your meditation and prayer as we look toward a new season of life and ministry together as a church family? As you close your time in prayer, be sure to put at least one of these truths like a lozenge under the tongue of your soul and let it dissolve as you come to a time of prayerful adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

³ <https://www.efca.org/sof>. Accessed 9/19/25 @ 10am.