

"I'm Not OK- You're Not OK"

Intro: the problem.

- Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK - You're OK*
- 1967 psycho-analysis of the human condition - concludes (very surface summary) that we need to decide that we are OK and that others are OK to be happy.
- Not really speaking about Harris's book, but his title strikes at a problem that I'm talking about.
- Most in the room have been a Xian for at least two decades--some for more than 7 decades.
- We're serious about the pursuit of holiness, and have been seriously pursuing it for many years.
- But this produces in us a certain attitude sometimes that it not good: we sometimes begin to feel that *We're OK* and that *Those Who Are Like Us Are OK*.
- Theologically we know that this isn't the case -
- But often the way we deal with Sanctification practically turns the "pursuit of holiness" into a battle of moralism, not God-ward growth
- This feeling that "We're OK" causes us to begin to lose sight of what grace really is, and of the realization that--in this fallen human condition--we're not OK and that those who are like us aren't OK.
- For the purpose of this sermon I'm going to refer to this concept of realizing that we aren't OK as we are and that those like us aren't OK as they are--that our sinfulness messes up and messes with everything that we do this side of death--as "Brokenness."
- I want us to look at how Paul expresses this sense of brokenness in his life and ministry;

I. Paul's sense of brokenness is central to his understanding of grace

- Our sense of brokenness, and our understanding of grace, starts with the law.
- As Paul deals with grace in this passage he starts--as he needs to--with the law.
- Paul is saying that the law is good if it's used lawfully and in accordance with the gospel: but what does that mean?
- To understand what it means to "use the law lawfully" first note, in v. 9, that "***the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless*** and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

The law is for sinners, to show us how far we fall short of it: it isn't for righteous people because,

- (1) there are no righteous people (Rom. 3:12: *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*) **and**
- (2) you can't be righteous by following laws--if it was possible to be righteous, you'd be righteous because you are, not because you've been told how to be. (Gal 2:16)

[Calvin: “bad manners produce good laws”]

The law exists to show us our sin! (not to help us be righteous)

[1Ti 1:11 in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.]

- So now that we know to "use the law lawfully" is to “use it to show us our sin,” what does it mean to, "use the law in accordance with the gospel"?
- It is using the law to see how evil we are, so that we can begin to grasp how much we need God’s grace!
- So, now we’ll look at what grace does for us: (This is review for most of us, but we’ve got to go over it to get back to brokenness, so work with me here...)

1. Grace Justifies - (“Justification”)

(Review) three aspects of justification:

A. Takes away guiltiness of original sin

- Define "guiltiness" - not "felt guilt" but "legal guilt before God."
- (1 Cor. 15:21-22) *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*
- [Exp.:] Adam, our covenant head...
- (Rom. 3:23-24, 5:12-14)

B. Takes away guiltiness for past sins

- (Col 2:13-14) *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*
- “record of debt” not only Adam’s sin, but our’s...

C. Takes away guiltiness for future sins

- We often act like Justification leaves off at the point where we are justified: the future is up to sanctification. But the guiltiness of future sins is taken away too!
- (2 Cor. 5:17) *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
- (Rom. 5:9-10) *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*
- Christ paid for all sin, even our future sin.

2. Grace Sanctifies [read Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*]

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 “Sanctification may be defined as that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which, He purifies the sinner, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works. It differs from justification in that it takes place in the inner life of man, is not a legal but a recreative act, is usually a lengthy process, and never reaches perfection in this life.”

- 3 views of sanctification: (ways people treat this process)
- Don't think, “views that some people have.”
- Ask yourself, “do I have this view? Do I act like I have this view sometimes?”

A. Victorian / Fundamentalist (and Catholic) concept of sanctification:

i. Do fewer "sins."

ii. Do more "good deeds."

- Nothing wrong with either of these ideas: we want to commit fewer "sins" and to do more "good deeds" - but this way of looking at sanctification leads to poor theology:
- In order to actually “do less sin” we have to reduce the meaning of sin from, “an all-encompassing state of being” to, “individual actions.”
- Then we can start to build a hierarchy of these actions: the ones we can really point to--murder, adultery, theft, cheating on your taxes, lying, divorce, etc., become big issues while more subtle sins get overlooked; gossip, gluttony, behaving in an un-loving manner, etc.
- So long as you aren't doing the first group you can feel pretty good about yourself.
- But our problem isn't individual sins; it's our fallen sinful nature.
- (Col 2:20-23) *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations--[21] "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" [22] (referring to things that all perish as they are used)--according to human precepts and teachings? [23] These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*
- Stepping away from sin and things we call sin doesn't deal with the deeper issue of the flesh!
- *People* aren't capable of doing good deeds: We need Christ to work His righteousness through us!
- This view of sanctification *treats grace like something that makes us holy enough* for God:
- According to this view, grace gives us the ability to clean up our act so we can come before God.
 - Ex: trying to overcome cursing as a child - I had limited sin to

- actions, not condition.
- Even if we overcome these problems we're not in "pretty good shape."
- This view of grace leads us to a church obsessed with ladder climbing: as we work to "do less bad" and to "do more good" we begin to compare ourselves to others to make ourselves feel better.
- This happens because *rank is central to human existence*:
- Part of why X spends so much time condemning Pharisee-ism is the tendency of well-meaning humans to turn the pursuit of holiness into a game of obtaining rank.
- We rate ourselves against each other--or against others in other churches--to prove our spiritual status.
- A grace that improves our morality isn't enough; because it produces a church that can't function like the Church is called to function.
- **Nathaniel Philbrick, *Sea of Glory: the U.S. Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842*** - traces the voyage of the "U.S. X-X": an expedition under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes to explore the Antarctic and to map the entire Pacific.
- Also relates how Lt. Wilkes obsession with rank and personal pride nearly thwarted the expedition over and over as he abused the sailors and scientists aboard his fleet to promote his personal glory.
- As the pride and arrogance of its commanding officer made the U.S. X-X almost incapable of fulfilling the charge it had been given by the U.S. government, When an individual or a church becomes caught in a simplistic view of "doing good" and "not doing bad" it loses its ability to function as God calls it to.

B. Philosophical (sometimes "Presbyterian") view of sanctification:

- i. Think more: we become more sanctified by learning more theology.**
- ii. Think better: we become more sanctified by weeding out our fallen thinking.**
 - Again, nothing wrong with either of these ideas: we want to understand our theology better, we want to give up our old ways of thinking.
 - But it is a violation of our theology to think that our problem is that we don't know enough:
 - The problem is *us*; everything we think, everything we do.
 - More knowledge won't fix it. We need grace; and not just grace that pours knowledge into us like a bucket--grace that fundamentally *changes who we are*.
 - This view tells us that our problem is a lack of knowledge:
 - It says that grace teaches us what to think and what not to think:
 - But our problem is far more than thinking, it's *our whole being--*

thoughts, actions, feelings, everything--(Gen. 6:5: only evil continually; Ps. 51:5: brought forth in iniquity; Is. 46:6: righteous deeds like filthy rags)

- No amount of thinking will fix it.
- “Grace” must mean more than better thinking.

[1Ti 1:12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,
1Ti 1:13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,
1Ti 1:14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
1Ti 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.]

C. Biblical Sanctification:

i. The HS makes us more aware of how sinful we are.

- 1 Tim. 1:8-10 / Heb. 8:10 → “law on our hearts”
- The HS shows us--through the law--has messed up we are.
- We become more aware of how wrong our sinfulness is.

ii. The HS makes us more aware of how vast God's grace is.

- 1 Tim. 1:14
- The HS reveals how good God is.
- (Col 1:19-22) *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. [21] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.*
- The HS shows us that grace is big enough to overcome what we know about ourselves.

iii. We exhibit greater brokenness / more love for others--and for God.

- 1 Tim 1:15 - in v. 13 Paul was talking about his past, but here the Greek verb, “*ἐμῆ*” is in present tense: Paul is not just saying "I was messed up" but, "I *am* messed up"! And this isn't an isolated attitude:
- Paul feels strongly enough about this that it comes up again and again in his writing--*it's one of the governing attitudes of his ministry.*
 - Phi 3:12-13: *Not that I have already obtained this [that is, knowing Christ in truth, and becoming like Him] or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [13] Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies*

ahead

- Note this progression (Sam pointed out as we discussed this):
- 1 Cor. 15:9 *For **I am the least of the apostles**, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* (Ephesus - AD 55)
- Eph 3:8: *To me, though **I am the very least of all the saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ* (Prison in Rome - AD 60)
- 1 Tim. 1:15: *...to save **sinners**, of whom **I am the foremost**.* (Rome - AD 62-64)
- **Paul applies this attitude to us:** Phil 2:3: *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*
- Despite his authority and power as an apostle, **he consistently acknowledges that he, Paul, is a broken sinner.**

II. A proper sense of brokenness allows us to live and minister in grace.

A. When we fail to see our brokenness we begin to fail to rightly credit Christ in a practical, day-to-day sense with our salvation and our holiness.

- While intellectually assenting to our dependence on His grace, we begin to live as though we're "going it alone."
- This means that, regardless of how "good we're doing" (by our understandings of morality), we are not practicing holiness.

B. When we fail to see our own brokenness, we become judgmental and haughty towards others who's sin we can perceive more easily than our own.

- It's human nature to see sin in others--to compare ourselves to others in order to prove to ourselves that we're better.
- And we do this with both real sin in others, and imaginary sin: when we look at differences between ourselves and others without an appreciation of our brokenness, we have in mind that we must see them as less than us, and we will turn those differences into sin so that we can be better for being different.
- We make these comparisons not just with the world, but also with other believers.
- Because it's natural to look for sin in others, having the sort of sense of our selves that Paul possesses of himself allows us to withdraw from the game of comparison: if we have an appropriate sense of our own sinfulness we won't be looking for ways to see other's as more sinful than we are.

C. If we have an appropriate sense of our own sinfulness when we *do* encounter other's sin, we are better able to see the potential for grace in that circumstance, and love and serve rather than condemn.

- It also means that when we encounter real sin we don't shrink back either in (1) disgust or (2) fear of contaminating ourselves: we know that we're sinners too, that we're capable of equally evil things, so we move forward into the

situation with love, armed with the gospel, to bring reconciliation.

- (2 Cor. 5:16-19) *From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*

D. Examples:

- Saw “Walk the Line” (life of Johnny Cash) Friday night, scene that illustrates this: June Carter Cash started her musical career as the youngest daughter of the Carter Family--a family that toured as a gospel group. As she grew up and continued to pursue music on her own she married Carl Smith but, under the strains of touring, the marriage fell apart. We see her in the movie walking through a store where several of the employees know who she is and express their admiration for her music--but one woman specifically compliments her parents music. She responds graciously by saying that she’ll pass on the compliment next time she sees them. The woman responds by saying, “Your parents are good Christian folk--I’m surprised that they even talk to you anymore after that Carl Smith business; divorce is an abomination: marriage is for life.”
- Now, while part of that woman’s statement was true, I don’t think any of us would confuse her action with being an attempt to carry out the, “ministry of reconciliation” that she had been given as a believer.
- But her action probably came as a result of her understanding of the pursuit of holiness: she had isolated herself from those that did things that might contaminate her, and so when she was confronted with easily identifiable sin, she lashed out in self-righteousness--and sinned against God. Would this woman have responded that way if she had a more appropriate sense of her own sinfulness and brokenness?
- Now, while we all can watch a scene like that and say (like I did), “that woman does not have an appropriate sense of her own brokenness,” how many times have we been the person who was confronted with another’s sin--real or perceived--and lashed out to condemn and shun so that we’ll feel better about how we live?

III. Lastly, we see what Paul’s proper sense of brokenness causes in him:

1Ti 1:16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

1Ti 1:17 To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

- As we become more aware of our sinfulness -- more aware of the reality that “We’re not OK” -- and more aware of God’s greatness,
- we become overwhelmed with a need--not to glorify ourselves so that we’ll feel more secure--but with a need to glorify and worship God, the only one who is not broken.