

## The Greatest Sin of All

### Introduction

A while back, someone asked me what do you think is the greatest sin of all? What Sin does the most damage? What sin has the greatest eternal consequences? What sin causes the most harm to mankind? How would you answer that question? There have been some incredibly horrible sins in the history of mankind. I think there are several sins in the running for greatest of all.... Maybe causing an unjust war....or the Holocaust....or slavery...or torture... or sexual crimes on children... Spend a minute deciding how you would answer and we will get back to it later. I said last week that we were going to close our series What is truth, but as I processed that this week, I was prompted to continue our exploration of truth.

This is the eighth week of our series What Is truth? We have been processing the teachings of John MacArthur as we explore spiritual terrorism. False teachers who blend into our churches and mislead the flock.

I believe that the church today is the most susceptible to false teaching and Spiritual terrorism than at any other time in church history. Biblical ignorance within the church is deeper than it has ever been before. Just compare sermons from the early 1800's to sermons today. Or look at any Christian book published over 100 years ago compared to today.

Bible teaching today has been deliberately dumbed down, made as broad and shallow as possible, oversimplified, and adapted to the lowest common denominator. And after all that, it is then tailored to appeal to those with short attention spans.

Sermons are brief, simplistic, overlaid with as many pop culture references as possible, and full of anecdotes and jokes. Sermons are now focused on man centered issues (self esteem, personal relationships, successful living) to the exclusion of Christ exalting doctrines of Scripture. They are far from preaching what Paul called the "Whole council of God"

Acts 20:26–27 (ESV) 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul explained his approach to preaching even when he was among unchurched pagans and a debauched Roman Culture.

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 (ESV) 1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Now remember that the church at Corinth was the Church Gone Wild. But Paul deliberately did not customize his message or adjust his delivery to suit the Corinthian cultural tastes. Later he would add this.

1 Corinthians 9:20–23 (ESV) 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Paul did not change the message but rather he avoided making himself a stumbling block. He was not saying that he adapted the gospel message. Paul had no thought of catering to a generation's preferences. He wanted to make sure that the Corinthians knew that lives are changed by the Word of God and nothing else.

But Today, church marketers tell us that the message needs to be contextualized, streamlined, and revamped for every generation. We have been doing this for 50 years and it has left most Christians grossly untaught, wholly unprepared to defend the truth, and almost blind to how much is at stake.

For example, post moderns reject substitutionary atonement. Scripture is clear that Jesus suffered on the cross as a substitute for us. He took the punishment that we deserved. His death was a propitiation in that He paid for it all and satisfied the divine wrath of God against our sins.

But post moderns say that view makes God seem harsh and barbaric. They label the concept of substitutionary atonement as "a form of cosmic child abuse"

The Emerging Church movement has tried to reimagine the same doctrines that people have defended for generations. Including, the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, the doctrine of original sin, and the exclusivity of Christ for salvation.

For example, in the Episcopal Church during their denominational meetings of 2006 the leaders were called by their worldwide Anglican communities that they repent of their decision to admit a practicing homosexual as bishop. Instead they doubled down. They openly blessed same sex marriages, elected a woman who had blessed same sex unions as their presiding bishop, embraced the most radical feminist theological agenda and led public prayers in which she referred to Christ as "Our Mother Jesus"

At the same time, the Presbyterian Church USA approved alternative designations for the persons of the Trinity. Instead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit they favored, Mother, Child and Womb or Rock Redeemer and Friend.

I am pleased to report that the Episcopalian Church is slowly fading away. 3.4 million worldwide in 1965. 1.2 million now.

The Presbyterian Church USA has laid off many employees and had budget cuts worth \$9.1 million.

The PC(USA) reported it lost 140 churches and established only four. The previous average for the establishment of new churches between 1995 and 2005 had been nearly 30 churches per year. The congregations of the remaining 8,432 churches are becoming smaller and smaller, the data shows, as only 367 churches have more than 800 members. Almost 70% of the churches have fewer than 100 members, and nearly a quarter of the churches have no more than 25 members. However, the more conservative PCA reported 7,223 new members and 22 new churches in 2024, including a 16.56% increase in adult baptisms and a 2.4% increase in infant baptisms.

### The Church Today

I am convinced that the greatest danger facing Christians today has infiltrated the church already. Countless false teachers already have prominent platforms in the evangelical movement; evangelicals themselves are loath to practice discernment or question or challenge anything taught within their movement; and many evangelicals have concluded that no doctrine or point of theology is worth fighting for.

The problem is that the Evangelical movement is amorphous, poorly defined, and hard to identify true leaders. That is why it has become such a monstrosity. There is no membership, no denominational oversight, no clear discipline processes and not clear process to deal with false teachers.

Almost anyone can declare themselves evangelical and make himself a pastor or teacher. Churches today are often planted by individuals who are neither doctrinally nor personally qualified for church leadership. They are self appointed and self certified. They usually have minimal oversight of elders and no accountability to anyone.

We have been flooded with ministers who are grossly unprepared for ministry and cannot discern even the most basic doctrines of the faith. They regard big numbers as proof of success and are convinced that careful doctrinal teaching is actually the enemy of church growth and funding.

It is time for the faithful remnant to redraw clear lines and step up our energies in the War for Truth. We have to quit calling apostates apostles, we have to quit calling apostates prophets, we have to quit calling apostates pastors, and we have to quit calling apostate churches churches of Jesus Christ. We have been brainwashed to be politically correct. I have heard many say that I should not be calling our names of apostates.

In light of all the biblical commands to fight a good warfare, it is both naive and disobedient for Christians in this post modern era to shirk that duty.

These are spiritual terrorists, sent by Satan, who have willfully chosen to reject Jesus after fully understand the gospel. They take advantage of our openness to attack the very foundations that provide that freedom.

The church does not seem to have the will or the inclinations to construct boundaries for its self defense. Like our Southern Border, we let almost anyone into the pulpit without vetting them.

Spiritual terrorists are plotting the destruction of the church. Yet evangelicals have done very little to restrain apostates or expose them. The church borders are open for them and the worst of the worst have almost complete freedom in the Evangelical movement.

Christians are not supposed to be gullible. We are not to turn a blind eye to danger. We are not to have fellowship with those of the darkness but rather are called to expose them.

Ephesians 5:10–12 (ESV) 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

The danger of false teachers is real and imminent. Jude gave us a wake up call to battle.

### Our Response?

Jude 17–23 (ESV) 17 But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. 18 They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” 19 It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

### Remember

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First Jude tells us that we must remember what was prophesied. The apostles told us that false teachers would come. Jude's words here are a direct quotation from 2 Peter. That clearly is the prophecy Jude is referring to.

2 Peter 3:2–3 (ESV) 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Jude is reminding us that God is sovereign and still in control. Everything that we are seeing was not surprising to God. It is what He foreknew and wanted us to know so that we would not be caught off guard. He told us that we should expect an influx of apostasy and here it is.

Our duty is to respond correctly. Not only should we not be surprised, we should have anticipated and prepared for it. When an absolutely reliable source tells us that terrorists are coming, we should find out who they are and expose them before they do damage.

We have no excuse for not being ready. The entire New Testament warned us over and over and wolves in sheep's clothing are obvious and everywhere. Only sinful and willful unbelief can account for the refusal of so many to heed these warnings.

## Remain

A second way we ought to respond to apostasy is by remaining faithful. We need to build one another up in the faith and maintain our spiritual stability. Above all, stay committed to the truth. Don't waver. Jude includes four aspects of this principle.

1. Remain faithful by building yourselves up on your most holy faith.

Jude 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith

The phrase "your most holy faith" is a reference to sound doctrine....a right understanding of God's truth as it is revealed in Scripture.

Peter says almost the same thing in his letter.

2 Peter 3:17–18 (ESV) 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jude tells us to first be strengthened and become mature in the faith. It is a call to the spiritual discipline of studying the Word.

We fight apostasy by remaining in the study of the Word of God.

2. Maintain your purpose and focus by praying in the Holy Spirit.

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

We must commune constantly with the Spirit of God. We need to be reminded of our dependence upon Him...to seek His protection, grace, insight and power.

The faithful life is kept on track by the spiritual disciplines of Bible study and prayer....aka Abiding.

We fight apostasy by praying in the Holy Spirit constantly.

3. We are to remain obedient by keeping ourselves in the love of God.

21a keep yourselves in the love of God,

Jude is reminding us of the teaching of Jesus and our need to remain obedient in the faith.

John 14:21 (ESV) 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

We fight apostasy by remaining in His love and by being obedient.

4. We are to remain by looking for His return.

21b waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

When we live each day with the return of Jesus on our minds. Knowing that it could happen at any time, we place our focus on the mission.

We fight apostasy by focusing on the return of Jesus.

So we remain by studying His word, praying in the Holy Spirit, being obedient through love and focusing on His return. This is the only way to survive in a time of apostasy. Each of these help us focus on heavenly things....

Colossians 3:1–4 (ESV) 1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

## Reach

We remember, we remain and then Jude tells us to reach out.

22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

We have to remember that our focus has been thus far on the apostate. And many of them, according to scripture, are not able to be saved. That is not true of those they have deceived. We are not just to oppose false teachers but we are to go on a rescue mission to save those who have been led astray.

Jude's words convey urgency and are quite vivid to reflect exactly what God thinks of Apostasy. Jude says that there are three kinds of people who have been deceived by these apostates.

1. The Confused.

Jude 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

They are doubters. They have been exposed to false teaching and it has shaken their confidence in the truth. They are not yet committed to the error yet, but they are just doubting.

They are not committed to the truth either. Likely people who have not ever fully surrendered and believed the gospel. However, some could be authentic believers if they are spiritually very young. Either way, exposure to false teachers have revealed a dangerous weakness in their faith by causing them to doubt.

Jude tells us to have mercy on them. Don't write them off because they are weak and wavering. They are confused because they are absolutely open to any and every teacher and devoid of any discernment. Either not saved or still in the Spiritual nursery.

These are the most accessible but most vulnerable. They need truth, but they are being offered and duped by almost everything else.

Churches today are packed full of these people. They drift from church to church. More concerned about liking the music than by whether or not they will hear the truth. Often they are absorbed in religion for self-centered reasons. They want a better life and are susceptible to anyone who offers to meet their "felt needs" They are the first line victims of false religion. We are to have mercy on them

And of course, the chief mercy that they need is the mercy of the gospel message. Once they understand and surrender to the truth, they can begin to lay a foundation for true discernment rather than the endless cycle of confusion that they have been chasing.

## 2. The Convinced.

Jude 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

This group is further away from God and are much harder to reach. We don't have time to beat around the bush. Jude says we must snatch them out of the fire....which of course means that they are already IN the fire.

He pictures the apostate and their teaching as a wild fire. Burning hot, destroying all in its path, destructive, and potentially lethal. Jude underscores the urgency of the need for rescue and the magnitude of the evil in false

teaching.

The fact that they are in the fire means that they have bought the apostates lies. They are not doubters anymore. They have to some degree owned the false doctrines. They are spiritually being singed by Hell. They need something more than mere mercy. Jude is calling us to use any legitimate means to pull them from the fire.

The principle here is important. When you meet someone who is a convinced follower of false doctrine, don't automatically turn your back on them. Don't immediately push them away or shun them. Don't respond with hostility.

At the same time, you cannot embrace someone as a part of the true family of God who rejects essential components of the gospel truth. Don't offer someone who is convinced of a serious falsehood unconditional acceptance as a believer.

Jude tells us to try to snatch them out of the fire. Which means giving them the truth, with urgency, and coming with force. You don't toy with such an error or invite them to a debate over coffee. You treat the situation with an urgency that befits the evil of the apostasy.

This is exactly how Jesus responded to the Pharisees. Strong conviction, very blunt. His warnings were severe. He spoke to them of judgment, devastation, and hell. His warnings were similar to a warning you would give a neighbor whose house was on fire and they were asleep.

Remember that we are not waging warfare against people. We are in a battle over evil ideas- thoughts, arguments, and fortresses of Satanic lies. These who are convinced are victims of ideas, trapped and imprisoned by false doctrine, false worship, and evil systems of thoughts. The point of spiritual warfare is to liberate people from those lies.

It is a ministry of mercy to the confused but a ministry of rescue to the convinced.

### 3. The Committed.

Jude 23 (ESV) to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Obviously pulling people from the fire requires that we get close to them. Jude warns us that there is severe danger in doing so. We can't always tell the difference between those who are merely convinced and those who are fully committed to the apostasy. Some are deceived....others are deliberate deceivers. Some are disciples of error others are the propagators. Some of them are the false apostates or growing in that skill.

Even though God's word tells us that many of these apostates are beyond salvation and their judgement has come from long ago...we don't know which ones are beyond help. Thus, Jude suggests that ought to show even these false teachers a kind of mercy. For sometimes even the deceivers themselves can by God's grace be pulled from the fire of lies. So show them mercy, Jude says, But do it with fear....despising the defilement of their evil.

The expression Jude uses is shocking. He uses a Greek word for garment that signifies underwear and a word for polluted that means stained in a filthy manner, spotted and stained by bodily functions. He is comparing false teaching to soiled underwear.

One of the most important aspects of Jude's entire message and runs through his entire letter... is this...apostasy is the greatest sin.



**False teaching is the deadliest and greatest of all sins because it is an expression of unbelief which is the distillation of pure evil. They don't just reject Jesus but they teach others and lead them to hell in Jesus' name**

The deadliest? The most abhorrent? What about pornography, abortion, sexual perversion, adultery, child abuse? There are terrible sins and are destroying our society. We should be outraged and repulsed by these sins. But heresy that undermines the gospel is far more serious because it places the souls in eternal peril and the darkness of lies keep people in permanent bondage to their sin.

Heresy keeps people deceived and unable to see the true Jesus who can rescue them. The true Jesus is the only way. The Jesus the apostates teach has no power to set them free. You must know the truth...the true Jesus and His word...to be free indeed.

Jude says apostasy is a kind of spiritual filth. We should no more risk being under these apostate's lies than we would want to carry someone's filthy stained underwear close to ourselves. He may be drawing from the prophet Isaiah where his reference to soiled garments is that of soiled menstrual cloths.

Isaiah 64:6 (ESV) 6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

In Revelation, Jesus tells the church at Sardis...

Revelation 3:3–4 (ESV) 4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

These passages show us what God thinks of Apostasy and apostates. We have been given explicit instructions in how to deal with them. False doctrine and the associated wickedness of the apostates, and those who believe them have stained souls. We are instructed to not get close enough to be corrupted. Paul gave the same warning to the Romans.

Romans 16:17–18 (ESV) 17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

You can't build a friendship with a false teacher. You cannot pretend to accept such a person as a fellow believer. You and I must understand that people who buy into apostasy and damnable error are either wittingly or unwittingly agents of the kingdom of darkness and enemies of the truth. We can't risk being defiled by their corruption.

So we draw near, but we don't draw near? Yep. We are to show mercy to all three groups. But it is a fearful and guarded mercy. We give them the light of the truth, confront their error with truth, for that is the only hope of freeing them from the bondage and consequences of their own apostasy. We do so with care, always mindful of the dangers that such evil poses.

## What is Truth?

That is where we started this Series 8 weeks ago. By now I hope the answer is crystal clear. Truth is not any individual's opinion or imagination.

### **Truth is what God decrees.**

For a true Christian, this is not a complex issue. God's Word is what all pastors and church leaders are commanded to proclaim. When it is well received and when it is not. It is what every Christian is commanded to read, study, meditate on, and divide rightly. It is what we are called and commissioned by Christ to teach and proclaim to the uttermost parts of the world.

We have been given all the truth that we need. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that we don't know it all.

Isaiah 55:8–9 (ESV) 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Our knowledge of truth is not exhaustive but it is sufficient. We have been given enough truth to not only be warriors for God, but to be successful against the lies of the kingdom of darkness.

And, we are commanded to participate in that battle. Jude calls us to our battle stations urgently to engage the enemy with truth. We are not here to live lives of comfort, ease, peace and prosperity. The Christian life is supposed to be non-stop warfare.

Ephesians 6:10–12 (ESV) 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

2 Timothy 2:3–4 (ESV) 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

2 Timothy 4:7 (ESV) 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Corinthians 6:4–10 (ESV) 4 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; 7 by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Not exactly the prosperity gospel...I pray that by now we all understand that those who are unwilling to fight against lies and false religion are no true friends of Christ.

Look at any period of church history and you will discover this significant fact: Whenever the people of God have sought peace with the world or made alliances with false religions, it has meant a period of serious spiritual decline, even to the point where at times the truth seemed almost to be in total eclipse. But whenever Christians have contended earnestly for the faith, the church has grown and the cause of truth has prospered.

I believe that there are people guilty of the greatest sin, apostasy, leading the Christian movement today. Pulpits filled with people who understand the gospel message but have willfully and purposefully rejected Jesus. They are agents of Satan who are leading unsuspecting people to Hell. They are seeking power, influence, self worship, and money. They are not Christian pastors, they are our enemy and we are called by God to fight.

We can't stand by passively and let these apostates continue to deceive. Jude is calling us to battle stations.....The truth is what God decrees. We must spiritually fight these demonic pastors and try to rescue those under their influence. And that is the God's truth. Let's pray.