

**Five Hallmarks of a Biblical Church**  
**Five Hallmarks Of A Biblical Church, Part 3**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher*  
*Countryside Bible Church*

Well I invite you to turn with me again to 1 Timothy chapter 3. For those of you who are visiting with us, for some three years on Sunday morning we were making our way through Paul's letter to the Ephesians but we recently finished that. Taking a few months break here between that study and our next one which I think will start probably with the fall in early September on the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew chapter 5 through chapter 7, we'll unfold the richness of our Lord's greatest sermon. But between now and then, we're looking at a couple of subjects that have really been on my mind and heart for some time. And right now we're looking at what I call the Five Hallmarks of a Biblical Church, Five Hallmarks of a Biblical Church.

Although I cannot whole-heartedly recommend John Stott's more recent works, because unfortunately in old age, he has wavered on significant biblical issues. His earlier works are very helpful and very solid. In his book *Basic Christianity*, John Stott talks about the evidence that's all around us for the sinfulness of man. He reminds us that back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a great deal of optimism about man. It was widely believed then that man's nature was fundamentally good and that man's problems were really primarily the result either of ignorance or his environment. So that if you educate man and if you work to improve his living standards and conditions, then he will live together in happiness and good will. Many of the social programs that permeate our society are based on this essential premise.

But the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made that 19<sup>th</sup> century view seem increasingly silly and naïve. John Stott writes, "The persistence of conflict on the world stage and the widespread denial of human rights have forced thoughtful people to acknowledge that a hard core of selfishness exists in each and every one of us." John Stott goes on to say, "Much that we take for granted in a civilized society is actually based upon the assumption of human sin. Nearly all legislation has grown up because we simply cannot be trusted to settle our disputes with justice and without self-interest. A promise is not enough, we need a contract. Doors are not enough, we have to lock and bolt them. The payment of fares is not enough, we have to have tickets issued and then inspected and then collected. Law and order are not enough, we need the police to enforce them. All of this," Stott writes, "is due to our sin. We cannot trust each other. We need protection

against one another. It is a terrible indication of what human nature is really like.” That is an accurate biblical assessment of the human condition.

At the same time, however, Stott’s biblical assessment puts him in conflict with many of the world views that are all around us on the nature of man and his problems. For example, evolutionary naturalism teaches that man is an animal. The simple product of his instincts and those instincts are simply chemical reactions in his brain. Humanism teaches that man is basically good and that given the right information, given the right environment, he will and is continuing to improve. This question on the nature of man and his problems could not be more foundational to the life of the church. It is absolutely essential because where a church lands on this issue will ultimately shape its entire approach to ministry.

This was understood throughout the battles of church history. In fact, you remember the time of the reformation there was a battle on this very issue between Erasmus, the Roman Catholic scholar, and Martin Luther. Erasmus was initially sympathetic to the reformation because at the time of that the Reformation Period, any thinking Roman Catholic understood that the church desperately needed reform. It was coming out of the period of the Borgia pope’s - the Borgia family that controlled the papacy and was absolutely rife with every form of evil.

But Erasmus, while he understood the need for reform, was soon asked to respond to write an official church response to Martin Luther. And he wrote what he called his ‘Diatribes Concerning Free Will,’ that is, a discussion concerning free will. Luther responded with what he believed was his most important theological work, called the *Bondage of the Will*. If you have never read through church history, if you’ve never read an important document from the reformation, start with Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will*. It’s absolutely foundational. Luther saw it as the heart of the gospel. B. B. Warfield called Luther’s work, *The Bondage of the Will*, ‘the manifesto of the reformation.’

Now why did this become the issue? The free will of Erasmus verses the *Bondage of the Will* of Martin Luther. Why is it the issue? Why was this the point of attack? Listen to Luther’s explanation. He writes this to Erasmus in his book *The Bondage of the Will*. “I give you hardy praise and commendation on this further account that you alone, [Erasmus,] in contrast with all others, have attacked the real thing, that is the essential issue. You have not wearied me with those extraneous issues about the Papacy, purgatory, indulgences and such like, trifles rather than issues in respect of which almost all to date have sought my blood.” And he adds, “though without success; you, and you alone have seen the hinge on which all turns, and have aimed for the vital spot.” He says, “Erasmus, you get it. You understand that this is the key issue. Man’s nature and the extent to which sin has affected his nature.” So, in many ways, the issue we come to today is the most critical issue.

Now for the last two weeks we've been considering the hallmarks of a biblical church. I've borrowed that word 'hallmarks' from as it is borrowed in our language from the Goldsmiths' Hall in London. It's existed for some 800 years and when a piece of metal meets their standard for genuineness and purity then 'the hall' as it's often called for short puts its mark on that piece of metal. Therefore, it came to be called the 'hall mark', the hallmark. Today, the word 'hallmark' is used of those marks that demonstrate that something is genuine. We are looking then at the hallmarks of a biblical church.

Look at 1 Timothy 3:14; just to remind you, here Paul tells us why he wrote this first letter to Timothy, in some senses the other pastoral epistles as well. He says, "I am writing these things to you," this is First Timothy 3:14:

I'm writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I'm delayed,(as Paul expected he might be,) I write so that you will know [Timothy] how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

Paul wanted Timothy to know the principles by which he should conduct himself in the church.

The primary application of this text as we've already seen is that Christ, in the pastoral epistles, has told us how to do church. And we're responsible to do it. We're not talking here about methodology. We're talking about philosophy, a biblical philosophy of ministry - a set of non-negotiable principles that guide all of the choices and decisions a church makes. These governing principles can be found woven throughout the three books we call the 'pastoral epistles.' We call them that because they were written directly to pastors; 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. In these letters we find at least five essential hallmarks of a biblical church. Let me again remind you of all five of them as we continue to work our way through one by one.

The first hallmark is a high view of God. The second hallmark of a biblical church is a high view of Scripture. The third, a biblical view of man, the fourth, a biblical view of the church and the fifth hallmark is the central place of Christ and the gospel. Those are the five hallmarks. We've already looked at the first two - a high view of God and a high view of Scripture. If you've missed out on those, those really, in many senses, are foundational for what we're going to be dealing with today. I encourage you to go back and sort of listen again on the internet, catch up because they build on each other.

Today, however, I want to come to the third hallmark of a biblical church, and that is a biblical view of man. As we've done with the other two, I want to start by asking a simple question. 'What does that mean?' What does it mean to have a biblical view of man? Let me start with a basic definition and then we'll expand on that as we go along. What I mean is this – a biblical

church understands and embraces what the Bible teaches about the nature of man, his problems and their solutions. Let me say that again. A biblical church understands and embraces what the Bible teaches about the nature of man, his problem, or problems plural, and their solutions.

Now I say that and its important but yet we live in the middle of a culture that is surrounded and inundated by non-biblical views of man. In fact, let me start out by giving you sort of a description of the four primary views of man and his problems. The final one, the fourth one is the biblical one, we'll get there. But the first three of these views of man and his problems are the product of modern psychology. Most of the other views, there are other views that circulate through our culture, but most of the other views that exist are simply variations of these three basic psychological models. Let me give them to you.

Number one, we could call this first one 'depth psychology,' which is really the brain child of Sigmund Freud. Freud taught that man is an instinctual animal. He has instincts or drives which Freud called the 'id.' And those instincts or drives are good but those drives are shaped by and suppressed by society. He said that what we learned from the society is our learned societal conscience. And that learned societal conscience which he identified as our 'superego,' that conflicts with those basically good drives and that's where our problems come from. The society has taught us this kind of collective conscience that we have, and that conscience is in conflict with our basically good drives and instincts. So the guilt we experience is false guilt and the solution to our problems, depth psychology says, is to free the id. Free those basic instincts and let them function and, in turn, weaken the hold of the superego that is that societal conscience, the learned societal conscience, let's weaken that and let man run with what is instinctual. That will, (that's the problem) and that will solve his problem.

The second common view of man and his problems we can call 'behaviorism.' The father of this or, at least the leader of it, is B. F. Skinner. Skinner taught that man is a conditioned animal. He's born as a kind of blank tablet. His problems are caused by what the environment writes on that tablet. He's shaped primarily by what he learns from the environment around him. The problem you see is that environment fails us and writes the wrong messages on that blank tablet. That's the problem, that's man's problem. And so the solutions to man's problems is to restructure his environment to make him comfortable with himself and that will enable him to modify his behavior. If he can be comfortable with who he is, then and he's not restrained by what's been written on him by the society and the environment in which he finds himself, then he'll be able to modify his behavior, hence behavior modification or behaviorism.

The third view is humanistic psychology. We can connect this to Carl Rogers; humanistic psychology. Rogers taught that man is basically good with a good potential within. Actually a great potential within and he needs just to mature like a flower. As you listen to me explain this, by the way, you will hear this is absolutely rampant in the culture in which we live. He needs to

mature like a flower and the problem is, man's problem is this – the environment around him hinders the blossoming of that person to his full potential. Perhaps there are people, perhaps there are societal messages and other things that restrict him, that bind him and keep him from expressing his full potential. The solution is within. We just need to help that person heal, to let them express what's really inside their feelings, to think positively, to become comfortable with who they are and once they really embrace who they are they'll overcome the problems around them. They'll be able to express their great potential.

Those are the three shaping psychological views of man in our culture today and most others, in our culture anyway, can ultimately be traced back to one of those root ideas. The fourth view of man is the biblical view of man. And the biblical view of man begins with the reality that men are not animals, instead they are created by a personal God in His own image to glorify and to enjoy Him. The fact that we were created by God means that we belong to God. Do you understand that? God made you, He gave you life, you belong to Him. Every human being belongs to God, you do not belong to yourself and He has every right to tell you and to tell me what to do because we are His property, we belong to Him, He's our Creator, He made us. He sustains us; He gives us everything as we read this morning from Psalm 145.

And at first this worked out well; man was totally righteous, enjoyed a perfect relationship to God. But, of course, after Genesis 3, after the fall of Adam and Eve, everything changed and now the Bible teaches that each of us is born into the world as a fallen sinner. We are sinners by heredity and by choice. It's true that our environment influences us but listen carefully, the Bible says our environment does not determine who we are. In fact, let me put it very bluntly. The Bible teaches and we'll see this in a moment, the Bible teaches that you are personally responsible for the person you have become. You are and I am personally responsible for the persons we have become. It's not God's fault. It's not God's fault because of how He made you, it's not as Adam and Eve immediately began to shift the blame to one another, it's not your spouse's fault, it's not your parents fault, it's not your environments fault. It's your fault and it's my fault. At its root, our problem according to the Scripture comes down to a single word. It's the word sin. This is the biblical view of man that marks a truly biblical church.

Again we see this perspective on man and his problem throughout the Bible, but it absolutely permeates the pastoral epistles. I don't have time to show you every example but let me just give you a few examples. Because, remember now, Paul is writing to his son in the faith, he's writing about what life in the church should be like and these letters, 1 and 2 Timothy to Timothy and Titus written to Titus on the island of Crete; these letters are stamped with Paul's view of the world, with his worldview, and clearly comes through his view of man.

Look first at 1 Timothy chapter 1. First Timothy chapter 1 and he begins by addressing the problem of false teachers that were there in Ephesus and apparently they had they were Jewish

false teachers, shared some similarity to the Galatian heresy, they were adding the law into salvation. They were misunderstanding the whole purpose of the law; in fact, he says in verse 7 ‘they want to be teachers of the Law even though they do not understand either what they’re saying or the matters about which they made confident assertions.’ You never want that to be said of you as a teacher. Verse 8, now Paul’s going to teach about the law, what is the law’s purpose? The law, why did God give (and the law here is the Mosaic Law), he’s talking about what God gave at Mount Sinai, encapsulated in the Ten Commandments. What is the purpose of the law? It’s good if one uses it lawfully. So what is its purpose?

Well the law wasn’t made for a righteous person. He’s not saying here that there are such people. This is tongue in cheek, just as our Lord said, “I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” He wasn’t saying there were righteous people that didn’t need repentance, He was saying if you think you’re righteous then I’m not here to help you because you can’t be helped until you realize you, you need help. That’s really what Paul is saying here, he’s saying, you know the law wasn’t made for a person who is comfortable and confident in his own righteousness, although ultimately it will bring him to repentance, as it did Paul according to Romans 7.

But the law was to show person they were a sinner. Verse 9 goes on to say, ‘the law was given for those who were lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane.’ And then it goes on to list some of the commandments in different forms. ‘Those who killed their fathers or mothers, for murderers, immoral men, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, perjurers and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.’ This isn’t an all-inclusive list; this is just a sample he says.

What’s Paul doing here? He’s saying that God needed to intervene in human history and give His law at Sinai so people would understand the depth and seriousness of their sinfulness. This is basic to God’s revelation, Paul says. It’s true, by the way, even for really, really religious people. Look down in verse 13. You remember Paul, he was a fastidious Jew according to the external conformity to the law in Philippians 3 he says. ‘I was blameless, but I was formally a blasphemer’ verse 13 ‘and a persecutor, a violent aggressor, I needed mercy I was shown mercy, I was living in unbelief and I needed God’ verse 14 ‘God’s grace found in Jesus Christ.’ Verse 15 ‘it’s a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ That’s man’s problem. The problem is sin and Christ had to come to deal with sin. And Paul says, oh by the way, even though I was really, really a nice person. Even though I looked like the real deal on the outside, I was the foremost of all sinners. Sin is the problem.

You see this throughout these letters. But look over at chapter 5. Sin continues to be the problem, even with believers. In fact, even with spiritual leaders. In 1 Timothy 5 he’s talking about elders. There ought to be elders. They ought to minister and serve and lead the

congregation. Verse 18, those who labor at teaching and preaching ought to be paid by the ministry that they do or from the ministry that they do. Verse 19, be careful, ‘don’t receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses’ oh, and by the way, if the accusation against an elder proves to be true, those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. And then he says in verse 21, ‘I’m charging you to carry this out with impartiality.’ It doesn’t matter who it is. You see what Paul is saying? Paul is saying sin is so pervasive a human problem that no one is immune. It can even affect the spiritual leaders of the church.

But then in Titus, go over to Titus chapter 3, we get a feel for how far reaching this sin problem really is. Titus chapter 3. He begins chapter 3 by saying, you know we’re to be subject Titus, teach those congregations there on the island of Crete,

to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle,” and then he ends verse 2 with this line, “showing every consideration for all men.

You say wait a minute; some people just don’t deserve consideration. Paul says that’s not true, verse 3: “For” here’s why you should do that, here’s why you should show every consideration for all men. “For we also once were foolish ourselves.” Notice what Paul does. He includes all believers. He includes himself. He includes Titus. He includes all the congregations to which Titus is ministering. We also once were foolish ourselves. Here was our problem. We were disobedient to God. We were deceived by Satan and by our sin. We were “enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, we were spending our life in malice and envy; hateful, and hating one another.” There is the pervasive influence of sin. That is the human problem, Paul says. And that’s where we all once were. When you read those texts and others in the pastoral epistles, it is clear that sin is man’s problem.

You say where did all this begin? How did it happen? Well Paul alludes to that even here. Look back at 1 Timothy chapter 2. In the context of explaining the role of women, the proper role of women in the life of the public gathering, the corporate gathering of the church, he says when the church gathers for worship, verse 12: “I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” And then he gives two reasons. One of those is the order of creation, “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.” And the second reason is because of what happened in the fall. “It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.” And then Adam, unfortunately, chose to follow his wife, knowingly sinned against God and His law.

But do you see what Paul does here? He takes our sin problem all the way back to Genesis 3, the Garden of Eden. That’s where it began. Something happened there that has affected all of us.

You say well how? Well let's talk about that for a moment because it's crucial to understand the connection. What does this mean when we say sin is our problem? When we say that we're talking about much more than individual sins. Our problem isn't the individual sins that you can name that perhaps you have been guilty of this week. That is only symptomatic of our problems. Those sins only symptoms of the real problem. We're talking about the sinful condition of the human soul with which we're born and continue to live throughout our lives. That's the problem. It's not the outbreaks of boils on the skin that are the problem, it's the cancer within. Our deeds are like those outbreaks on the skin, the real issue is the cancer, the infection within our hearts. We're talking about what theologians call 'original sin.' What they mean by that is simply the effects of Adam's sin on every human being.

Did you know, as you sit here this morning, that what happened in the Garden of Eden affected you. You bear two effects from what happened in the Garden of Eden all those generations, thousands of years ago. What are those effects? Specifically there are two effects on every one of us of what happened in the Garden of Eden. Number one is personal guilt, and number two is inherited pollution. Personal guilt and inherited pollution. Now let me explain both of those. Very important to understand this. This is what we mean when we say sin is the problem. We're talking about original sin. We're talking about the effects that Adam's sin has on us and it's those two things: personal guilt and inherited pollution.

First of all, personal guilt. Keep your hand here in 1 Timothy, but turn back to Romans chapter 5. Here's where Paul makes it very clear that because of what Adam did, each of us shares personal guilt before God. In verses 10 and 11 of Romans 5, Paul talks about the fact that we were enemies of God, we've been reconciled through the death of His Son, rescued by the life of Christ. And then he says in verse 12, let me explain to you how we got into this problem and how we got out of this problem. Verse 12: "Therefore, just as through one man"[that's Adam] "sin entered into the world, and death through sin,"(so sin and death came through Adam and what happened in the Garden)"and so" [because of what happened in the Garden] "death spread to all men..."Now watch this: "because all sinned"(and look down in verse 19; he explains what he means by that)"For as through the one man's disobedience" [Adams disobedience] "the many"[that's us] "were made" [or constituted to be]"sinners..."

Now what's going on here? Absolutely crucial you understand. This is how God thinks about every living human being, every human being that's ever lived or ever will live. The verb tense here implies that when Adam sinned, all those many generations thousands of years ago, God thought of every human being as a sinner. Why?

Remember, by the way, before we get to why, remember we're not talking about feelings of guilt. We're not talking about that feeling that comes when you've sinned you know you've sinned and you sort of feel the pangs of conscious you feel the weight of guilt you feel bad about



what you've done. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about guilt in the sense of the relationship to the law. We're talking about standing before a judge and being declared guilty. We have real personal guilt before the Judge of all the universe. From the moment of conception, we stand before God as guilty of having violated His law and deserving of punishment.

Isn't that what David said in Psalm 51? When he's confessing his sin with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah? He says 'I was brought forth in iniquity' I was born in iniquity, 'and in sin my mother conceived me.'" He wasn't saying he was born illegitimately. He was saying you go all the way back to the moment of my conception and sin was a reality. Not by acts of sin but by this infection that includes real personal guilt. Through Adam's disobedience many were constituted as sinners. In the same way, verse 19 says, that we are constituted as righteous through the obedience of Christ.

So you see the relationship between the two? How did we get guilt for Adam's sin? Well, the same way we get righteousness from Jesus' righteousness. It is imputed to us; it is credited to our account because each of them were acting as our representatives. Adam, in the mind of God, was acting as your representative in the Garden and as my representative and when he sinned, I got credit for it. You say wait a minute, that isn't fair. How do I get credit for Adam's sin? Before you go too far on the fairness thing, remember that's the same thing God does with Jesus' righteousness. It's not fair either way, is it? That's the reality. When Adam sinned, God placed real, personal guilt for that sin in your account and in my account, because he acted as our representative. That's what I mean by real guilt, personal guilt.

But that's not all that happened because of Adam's sin in the Garden; the second effect of Adam's sin is inherited pollution. You were not born good. You were not born even neutral. You were born and I was born polluted. Probably even with specific propensities to sin inherited from our parents. But that inherited corruption expresses itself theologians say, that inherited pollution expresses itself two ways – total depravity and total inability. What's total depravity? You've heard that term. It simply means, the pollution we're talking about, the corruption permeates every part of us. That's what we mean by total. It doesn't mean you're as bad as you could be. I'm not as bad as I could be. No person is as bad as they could be because of the restraining grace and the culture. But it means every part of us is permeated with that corruption. There is nothing spiritually good in us at all in the sight of God.

You say now wait a minute. What about those things that appear good? I mean, after all there are plenty of people in our culture we see it in the news headlines; fortunately, occasionally there's some good news and there're people that do things that look like they're good. Are you saying those aren't good? Well, let me give you an illustration, and this isn't original with me, it's one I've used before but I think it really helps you to understand the context.

Imagine for a moment, a crew of pirates on a ship. Those pirates live in a relative degree of harmony. They seem, for the most part, to get along with each other. They work hard. They are loyal to each other, they help one another. They defend each other; on occasion they might even give their lives for a fellow pirate. Those appear to be good deeds, don't they? And yet their good deeds are, at the same time, evil deeds, why? Because everything they do, the entire compass of their lives, is an act of rebellion against their rightful king. If you ask a fellow pirate if that's a good deed, he will say yes. If you ask the king if it's a good deed, he will say no because they're living their entire lives in rebellion against my rightful authority. That's how it is with every unbeliever. He may do things that here on the pirate ship appear good to other pirates, but his good is really bad because it's done in rebellion against God, the rightful King. That's total depravity. Badness permeates every part of us.

But part of our inherited corruption is not only total depravity, but total inability. That's what theologians call it – total inability. What does that mean? It means the inability to change who we are. It means the inability to change our character. Man is incapable of changing his character or of in acting in any way distinct from his corruption. In other words, we're hopeless. That is our true condition. That is what we say man's problem is sin. We're saying that he has real guilt before God, both for Adam's sin and his own sin and, in addition to that, he has this inherited corruption that permeates every part of his being and there's nothing he can do to change it. That's man's problem. That's your problem. If you're in Christ, that was your problem that has been dealt with by the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Now what does this problem result in? Very practically, original sin creates serious consequences at several different levels. Here are the consequences of this sin problem we have. The first consequence has to do with alienation from God. The first problem has to do with God, sin alienates us from God. Now, you and I don't think too badly of our sin. Let's just be honest. We look at our sin and we go, you know it's really not that bad, I mean after all who did it hurt? Sometimes our sin doesn't hurt others. Understand that biblically, God has given you His law. He made you. He created you. He sustains your life. He's told you how you ought to live. You belong to Him. He has every right to tell you what to do. And then you and I rebel against that law and do what we want to do. So while your sin may feel very impersonal, in reality, think for a moment of several sins you've committed this last week. In the mind of God, those sins were very personal; they were a direct affront to His authority in your life. It was your saying, my saying to God, 'stay out of my life, I'll do what I want thank You.' It's a personal affront. God sees our sin as rebellion against Him.

That's why, look at 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul says 'we need a mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.' We need somebody to bring us together because we've got serious alienation. And, in fact, it's so bad, down in verse 6 that Christ, the Son of God Himself, must

offer Himself as a ransom to redeem us and reconcile us to God. That's the only way He can mediate is by dying in our place. In Romans chapter 5, I pointed out there, Paul says we were God's enemies. It doesn't matter whether you felt like God's enemy or not, that's God's assessment. We may be having fun on the pirate ship and may be happy with how things are going but that's not the king's perspective.

We were His enemies and we were only reconciled to Him through the death of His Son. And although God is very patient, and He is patient isn't He? Paul says in Romans 2 that God is patient and tolerant and He is pouring out goodness upon us in this life. Listen, you and I experience all kind of temporal goodness in this life, don't we? Yes, there are troubles in this life there are problems, but there are so many good things. Friends and family and good food, and wonderful experiences and we enjoy all those things. But unfortunately, what we tend to think is that means, 'God's okay, I'm okay.' You know everything going fine, God's not doing anything about my sin, He's not dealing with me, so it must be okay.

Paul says in Romans 2; don't mistake God's patience for tolerance. His goodness is intended to lead us to repentance. And if we don't repent but we just keep merrily on our way, living on the pirate ship having a good time doing what we want – Paul says you are storing up for yourselves what? Wrath. It's what he says, Romans 2. You're storing up for yourselves wrath in the day of wrath. There's a day of reckoning coming. It's like the guy who jumped out of a 20 story building and somebody heard him say, oh past floor number 10, saying, "okay so far." That's how it is. It may feel like it's okay. It may feel like things are great between you and God. Listen, the point of impact's coming. God says there will be a day when I will punish your rebellion. And I will punish it forever. That's the biblical reality. We are alienated from God.

There's a second consequence of our sin. Not only alienation from God but slavery to sin; slavery to sin. We become slaves of sin. This inward infection takes over. In 1 Timothy 6:5, Paul talking about the false teachers says they have a depraved mind. He says the same thing in Ephesians 4 about all unbelievers. In Mark chapter 7, Jesus says your problem is not your external actions. In Mark 7 -- we studied this a few weeks ago now, or a few months, I guess, on Sunday night -- when Jesus said your problem isn't all those actions, all those sins that you can see and the people see. Your problem is your heart. Because out of the heart come all of those sins. Your sins are merely a reflection of you. Your sins and my sins are not an aberration, they reflect who we are. But, unfortunately, those external sins and internal sins become masters.

Look at Titus chapter 3. Titus 3:3. I was here a moment ago, but notice what it says in the middle. Here's how unbelievers are. Here's the reality of sin. They are 'enslaved to various cravings and pleasures.' They think they're free. They think they're doing what they want. They're not free. They're slaves of sin. And it happens slowly doesn't it? It happens where we

sin because it's fun and enjoyable and exciting. And then those habits of sin become dominating and, before long, they become utterly controlling and enslaving. This is slavery.

Peter refers to this in 2 Peter 2:19, he says, false teachers promise people freedom from while they themselves are slaves of corruption. Now listen to what he says, "for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved." Here's the problem: we've become slaves of our sin. How does it happen? Well, earlier in that chapter, in 2 Peter 2:14, Peter explains with one sin. He describes false teachers as having a heart trained in greed; trained in greed. What does that mean? Well, a person becomes a greedy person because of a consistent pattern of choices and that trains them, it gets into a habit of greediness. That's the same with any other sin. We are slaves of it. It starts out slowly, we develop habits, we make conscious choices we want that sin and someday we no longer want it and we can't stop because it's controlling us. We are enslaved. Jesus said in John 8:34: "Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin."

So, the consequences of sin; alienation from God, slavery to sin, a third consequence of sin is conflict with others. Look back at Titus 3: 3. You know, I love living in Texas where there is a façade of civility. But, understand folks, it is just a façade, as opposed to Southern California where there was no façade. Look at verse 3, here's the truth about unbelievers. This was true of us before Christ; it's still true regardless of how the façade looks. End of verse 3, Titus 3: "spending our life in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." That's the reality. It creates conflict with others.

So where does this all lead? Where does this sin problem lead? Well look over at 2 Timothy 4:1. This is in the context we looked at it last week of the command for Timothy to preach the word of God. But in that context in chapter 4 verse 1, he says, "Timothy I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus," Now watch this "who is to judge the living and the dead..." There's where it's going. Ultimately every human being will stand before God, his rightful King, her rightful King, Creator, Sustainer, rightful Owner and will give an account. Believers will be at the judgment seat of Christ where their works will be evaluated, unbelievers, if you want to read the story of what that looks like, read Revelation 20. Where it is described what it will be when unbelievers stand before Jesus Christ. They will not find Him to be the meek humble person that He offers Himself today. It's coming to judgment.

So man's problem ultimately all stem from one polluted fountain. Your problems, my problems all come back to sin; either our own sin or the sins of others. Now why is this so important for a biblical church? Why does it need to mark a truly biblical church? Listen carefully, because if you miss or mess up the diagnosis you will always arrive at the wrong treatment. If you have the wrong diagnosis, you'll always have a flawed treatment. If man's problems are caused by sin, the treatment will only be salvation and sanctification and that brings you right back to the

Scripture where we saw last week in 2 Timothy 3: 15-17, the Scriptures are what lead us to the wisdom of salvation and to sanctification to be all that we ought to be. So it's absolutely crucial.

Now let me ask and answer very briefly -- how is this demonstrated in the life of the church? How can you see this? You walk in to a church, you're there a few weeks, how do you see whether they have a biblical view of man? If this is so important, what does it look like in everyday life? What do you look for? Well again, these aren't an inspired list nor are they comprehensive, but let me give you some help. Number one, if a church has a truly biblical view of man, it will teach that man's only hope is outside of himself in Jesus Christ. His only hope is outside of himself in Jesus Christ. If you understand the depth of the problem with sin then you will understand and teach that there is no hope of salvation in human effort or in human merit.

Look at 2 Timothy chapter 1. Second Timothy 1. Paul got this and he wanted Timothy to get it. Verse 8, he preached the gospel, the gospel about God's power and verse 9, God saved us, He rescued us, "He called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity..." Because we never would have gotten there, the foremost of sinners, as Paul described himself, would have never gotten there on his own. The only solution has to be God. You see this same thing in Titus chapter 3, after Paul describes that terrible condition we were in in verse 3, he says in verse 4, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He rescued us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy,". Down in verse 7, we are justified, that is we are declared right with God by His grace alone. Salvation must be an act of God solely based on the work of Christ. Unbiblical churches will see men and women either as perfectly well, or as sick and in need of divine assistance. But a biblical church sees sinners as dead and in need of the miracle of regeneration.

Number two, the church's chief goal for Christians, where there's this biblical view of man, will be their sanctification. If sin's the problem then the goal, once a person has come to Christ, will be to see them lay sin aside in their lives and become increasingly holy. Look at Titus chapter 2, and I wish I had time to take you through all the verses, I don't. Just look at Titus 2:14, it says, "Christ Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Here was the plan: deal with man's sin problem and alienation to God, the penalty of sin and then deal with the power of sin in his life and let him see an increasing pattern of holiness and a decreasing pattern of sin. Where there's a biblical church that will be the emphasis.

Number three, the messages you hear will address the issue of sin. I listened to a sermon of a pastor of a large well known seeker sensitive church. And you say well when do you listen to those? Well for me it's like a train wreck. I don't want to watch but I can't help myself, so. He was talking about pre-marital sex which, of course, he was against. But, he said something like

this and I'm not making this up, he said, he mentioned pre-marital sex, he said, 'okay I hate to do it but I've got to do it – sin, there I said it'. And then he moved on in his message. He essentially apologized for calling sex before marriage sin. Listen, when you don't hear the word sin often or when it's accompanied by a kind of an apology, you are dealing with a church that doesn't have a biblical view of man.

Number four, the church will use the biblical language of sin rather than the language of psychology. You will hear biblical words like 'repentance,' 'salvation,' 'sanctification,' 'sin,' rather than psychological words like 'self-help,' 'healing,' 'self-esteem,' 'felt needs,' 'self-worth,' 'victimization,' 'wholeness,' 'negative thinking,' 'positive thinking,' and on and on it goes.

Number five, where there's a biblical view of man the church will exist to encourage and facilitate change rather than simply support of people in their current condition. When I was on staff at Grace Church I took all the pastoral staff on a field trip down to a mega church there in Southern California, I still have a copy of their bulletin somewhere in my files. I was overwhelmed as I looked at the bulletin with the number of support groups. The one that really caught my attention though and I'm really not making this up, was one for co-dependant women married to sexually addicted men. Now, at the risk of sounding a little cheeky, my first thought was do they issue like brown paper bags for you to cover your head with when you go into that group so you can't be identified or what? I'm not saying here, don't misunderstand me, that every church that has something called 'a support group' is a bad church. What I am saying is that where support groups are the model, you have a church that doesn't have a biblical view of man. Instead they've embraced the culture's view of man; he simply needs support from others. The biblical view is he needs to be encouraged and shaped and directed toward true lasting change.

Number six, the church will not be structured to meet the felt needs of unbelievers. If you understand original sin, if you understand what Calvin said that the human heart is an idle factory, you know that it can't cater to people's felt needs because where do their felt needs go? If you want to read a list of unbelievers felt needs go to 1 John 2:15. It is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And if you cater in some way to those things, you can build a crowd, but it won't be the church.

Number seven, the church that has a biblical view of man understands the continuing struggle with sin even in the heart of the believer. Do you realize this? This is a reality. That's why in 1 Timothy 4:7, Paul says to Timothy, 'discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.' That's why in 1 Timothy 6:11, he says 'Timothy I want you to run, flee from all those things that characterize false teachers including the love of money.' That's why in 2 Timothy 2:22, he says Timothy, 'I want you to flee, run from the cravings of youth.' It's not talking about just sexual

sin, although that's included, he's talking about cravings for wealth and power and status and everything else, the cravings that go with that period of life. Timothy, don't walk, run. The biblical church understands that sin continues to be our problem throughout this life.

Finally, the church and its leadership that has a biblical view of man will understand that even religious people who claim Christ may not be Christians. Did you hear that? Even religious people who claim Christ, attend Christian churches, may instead be lost. If you want to see a glimpse of this read 2 Timothy 3:1-9, there's where that list of things in, men will be lovers of selves and lovers get pleasure and all that list. Guess what? That's not about the rank and file people -- that's about spiritual leaders attached to the church of Jesus Christ. How do I know that? Well, if you look at it, verse 5 of that chapter, 2 Timothy 3, says 'they hold to a form of godliness but they deny its power,' verse 6, 'they're the kind who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins,' etc. We're talking about people who show up with the name 'Christian,' who show up on Christian television. Not everybody talking about heaven is going there. That's what he's saying.

Paul understood this up close and personal. Look at 2 Timothy 4:9. This broke his heart. Second Timothy 4:9, "Make every effort, Timothy, to come to me soon;" Paul was about to die "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica;" Here was a guy who traveled with Paul, supported Paul, ministered to Paul, ministered along side of Paul as a partner in the gospel but who ultimately turned out to be not a Christian at all. What did John say? "They went out from us." Why? "Because they were not of us." A biblical church and its leadership understands that reality.

Now I'm going to be done in just a second but let me make this personal. Do you have a biblical view of man? Do you understand that your only hope of being made right with God is outside of yourself? Is your chief concern your own sanctification in pursuing holiness? Do you understand that all of your problems are caused by your sin and not by the people around you? Or are you blaming your sin on someone else, on your spouse or on your parents or on your environment? Do you understand the continuing power of sin in your life as a believer and are you doing everything you can to run from it as Paul told Timothy or as our Lord said to cut radically those things out of your life? Do you understand the danger of making a profession of Christ, telling everyone you're a Christian, even telling yourself you're a Christian and not being the real thing? Do you understand the command of 2 Corinthians 13:5 "examine yourselves to see if you're in faith"?

Sin is our problem. That's the bad news. But it's also good news, because if the problem is sin, there's hope because where there's sin, there can be forgiveness and lasting change from the inside out. That's the promise of the gospel. God loves you and He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for sins and He promised that whoever will repent and trust in His Son, He will rescue

them from the penalty of sin today, do the rest of this life from the power of sin and someday from the very presence of sin. He promised. That's the good news. And wherever there is a biblical church, they'll understand that and it will be marked by a biblical view of man and his problems. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You for this reminder of how desperately we need Christ. How desperately we need the gospel. Thank You that through the darkness of who we were shines the brightness of who Christ is and what He has done for those who will believe. Lord, we thank You and rejoice that You didn't leave us as we were. That You have redeemed us. You have reconciled us to Yourself. You have freed us from our slavery to sin where we no longer have to obey it it's every command. We can see an increasing pattern of righteousness. Father, we thank You and bless You. I pray for the person here this morning, Father, who doesn't experience that, who is still in every sense, a slave of sin. May this be the day, Father, when You remove the façade. When You help that person to see himself, or herself, as You do and then may they run to You who loves them and has offered them Your Son. Has offered forgiveness, has offered true change, Father I pray this would be the day when they run to You and find You to be the One who lovingly receives them. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.