

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

PRESENTED BY

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GREEN LAWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

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OUR LESSON TONIGHT IS ENTITLED "THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN." FOR OUR TEXT WE READ FROM THE SECOND LETTER WHICH PAUL WROTE TO THE THESSALONIANS, THE SECOND CHAPTER, VERSES 8-12. "AND THEN SHALL THAT WICKED BE REVEALED, WHOM THE LORD SHALL CONSUME WITH THE SPIRIT OF HIS MOUTH, AND SHALL DESTROY WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING; EVEN HIM, WHOSE COMING IS AFTER THE WORKING OF SATAN WITH ALL POWER AND SIGNS AND LYING WONDERS, AND WITH ALL DECEIVABLENESS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN THEM THAT PERISH; BECAUSE THEY RECEIVED NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED. AND FOR THIS CAUSE GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE; THAT THEY ALL MIGHT BE DAMNED WHO BELIEVED NOT THE TRUTH, BUT HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS."

IN THIS PASSAGE WE DISCOVER FOUR THINGS THAT SIN DOES TO A MAN, AND WE CANNOT REALLY APPRECIATE THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN UNTIL WE SEE THAT WHICH SIN WORKS IN THE LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL. THE FOUR THINGS WHICH ARE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN THIS PASSAGE ARE, FIRST OF ALL, PAUL TELLS US THAT SIN INCITES THE SOUL TO A HATRED OF TRUTH. THE TENTH VERSE CONCLUDES WITH THIS LANGUAGE, "BECAUSE THEY RECEIVED NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED." IN ESSENCE PAUL IS SAYING THAT IN THE SAME HEART THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SIN AND FOR THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH; THAT WHERE THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH ABOUNDS, SIN WILL NOT ABIDE; AND WHERE SIN ABOUNDS, THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH CANNOT ABIDE.

THE SECOND THING HE SAYS THAT SIN DOES TO A MAN IS THAT IT ABANDONS THE SOUL TO SELF DECEPTION. IN THE ELEVENTH VERSE HE OBSERVES, "GOD SHALL SEND THEM A STRONG DELUSION THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE." THIS BASICALLY IS THE APPROACH OF SIN UNTO MAN, FOR YOU SEE SIN PROMISES A KINGDOM WHICH IS WHAT MAN DECEIVES HIMSELF INTO BELIEVING HE SHALL RECEIVE FROM SIN. BUT WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR SIN TO DELIVER, THAT WHICH SIN DELIVERS IS NOT A KINGDOM, BUT RUIN. THERE'S A TREE CALLED THE JUDAS TREE. AND THIS PARTICULAR TREE IS A VERY INTERESTING TREE; IT IS A TREE THAT PUTS OUT ITS BLOSSOMS BEFORE IT PUTS OUT ITS LEAVES. THESE BLOSSOMS ARE VERY BEAUTIFUL. THEY ARE A CRIMSON RED AND THEY PUT OUT A VERY FRAGRANT ODOR WHICH NATURALLY ATTRACTS THE HONEY BEE. BUT WHEN THE HONEY BEE COMES TO THE JUDAS TREE AND DRINKS OF THE NECTAR THEREOF IT SOON FALLS BENEATH THAT TREE FOR THE NECTAR OF THAT TREE IS POISON TO THE BEE. PAUL IS SAYING THAT THIS IS JUST EXACTLY WHAT SIN DOES TO MAN. HE IS SAYING THAT SIN OFFERS A KINGDOM TO MAN BUT IT DELIVERS TO HIM RUIN. IT PROMISES MAN PLEASURE, BUT WHEN HE GOES AND PARTAKES THEREOF IT TURNS OUT TO BE POISON AND DESTROYS HIS VERY BEING.

IN THE THIRD PLACE THE APOSTLE PAUL SAYS THAT SIN WORKS CONDEMNATION. PAUL SAID, "THAT THEY ALL MIGHT BE DAMNED WHO BELIEVE NOT THE TRUTH." THERE IS ONE INEVITABLE RESULT THAT COMES FROM A LIFE OF SIN AND THAT IS TO BE SEPARATED FROM GOD, AND THIS IS HOW THE APOSTLE PAUL DESCRIBES CONDEMNATION IN HIS LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS.

AND FINALLY IN THIS PASSAGE, PAUL SAYS THAT SIN CREATES WITHIN A MAN DESIRE TO SIN BECAUSE HE LOVES TO DO IT. NOTICE THE CONCLUSION OF THE TWELFTH VERSE, "BUT HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS." NOW THIS IS NEVER THE WAY A MAN STARTS IN SIN, BUT IT IS ALWAYS THE WAY A MAN CONCLUDES IN SIN. HE BEGINS IT PERHAPS THROUGH WEAKNESS. BUT IF HE DOES NOT OVERCOME IT THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, HE CONCLUDES HIS INDULGENCE BECAUSE HE LOVES TO COMMIT THE SIN.

WE LOOK THEN AT SIN AND WE SEE WHAT SIN HAS THE CAPACITY TO DO TO AN INDIVIDUAL. WE SEE THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF SIN IN THE SOUL OF MAN AND WE ASK THE QUESTION "HOW CAN SIN ACCOMPLISH THIS IN MAN?" WE THINK THAT IT IS FAIRLY WELL SETTLED THAT A MAN CANNOT BE FORCED TO DO THAT WHICH HE CONSIDERS TO BE AGAINST HIS PERSONAL WELL-BEING. AND SO IF SIN RUINS MAN, AS PAUL SUGGESTS, IF SIN BRINGS DEATH, WHY IS IT THAT MEN SIN?

THIS IS WHERE THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN COMES IN. SIN IS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THESE THINGS IN THE LIVES OF MEN BECAUSE MEN DO NOT REALLY BELIEVE THAT CONDEMNATION IS THE END RESULT OF SIN. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE END RESULT OF SIN WILL BE THE DELIVERING OF THE PLEASURE THAT SIN HAS BEEN OFFERING ALL THE WHILE. BUT YET WHEN WE TURN TO THE WORD OF GOD WE FIND THAT THERE IS ONE THING THAT IS ALWAYS EMPHASIZED IN RELATIONSHIP TO TEMPTATION AND SIN. MAN SINS BECAUSE HE IS DECEIVED CONCERNING ITS NATURE AND ITS RESULT. THIS IS ESPECIALLY NOTICEABLE WHEN WE LOOK AT THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE WORLD. LET ME READ YOU SEVERAL PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH DESCRIBE TO US THE WAY IN WHICH SIN CAME INTO THE WORLD THROUGH OUR PROGENITORS. FIRST, GENESIS 3:6, 13: "AND WHEN THE WOMAN SAW THAT THE TREE WAS GOOD FOR FOOD, AND THAT IT WAS PLEASANT TO THE EYES, AND A TREE TO BE DESIRED TO MAKE ONE WISE, SHE TOOK OF THE FRUIT THEREOF, AND DID EAT, AND GAVE ALSO UNTO HER HUSBAND WITH HER; AND HE DID EAT." AND THE THIRTEENTH VERSE SAYS, "AND THE LORD GOD SAID UNTO THE WOMAN, WHAT IS THIS THAT THOU HAST DONE? AND THE WOMAN SAID, THE SERPENT BEGUILED ME, AND I DID EAT." WHEN WE COME TO THE NEW TESTAMENT THE SAME FACT IS REFERRED TO. READING II CORINTHIANS 11:3, "BUT I FEAR, LEST BY ANY MEANS, AS THE SERPENT BEGUILED EVE THROUGH HIS SUBTILITY, SO YOUR MINDS SHOULD BE CORRUPTED FROM THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST." I TIMOTHY 2:14, "AND ADAM WAS NOT DECEIVED; BUT THE WOMAN BEING DECEIVED WAS IN THE TRANSGRESSION." AND THEN OF COURSE THE TENTH VERSE OF OUR TEXT, "AND WITH ALL DECEIVABLENESS OF UNRIGHT-EOUSNESS IN THEM THAT PERISH; BECAUSE THEY RECEIVED NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED."

THESE PASSAGES SHOULD IMPRESS ON OUR MINDS ONE GREAT TRUTH, AND THAT IS THE FACT THAT THE FIRST PERSONIFICATION OF SIN WAS ALSO ONE OF THE MOST APPROPRIATE. GOING BACK AGAIN TO GENESIS WE READ THE FIRST PERSONIFICATION OF SIN, "NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD WHICH THE LORD GOD HAD MADE." THE EMPHASIS HERE IS UPON SUBTLENESS; THE EMPHASIS HERE IS UPON SECRET MOVEMENT; THE EMPHASIS HERE IS UPON INSINCERITIES AND THUS IT MUST EVER BE WITH SIN. WE COULD REALIZE IT MUST BE SO IF WE WOULD JUST CONSIDER THE NATURE OF SIN, FOR YOU SEE SIN IS A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE AND ANYTHING THAT SEEKS TO DESTROY, ANYTHING THAT SEEKS TO TEAR DOWN, MUST DO SO THROUGH SUBTLETY AND THROUGH BLINDING THE EYES OF THOSE WHOM IT WOULD SEEK TO OVERTHROW. THIS IS THE REASON THAT IT WAS AT NIGHT, IT WAS UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS, THAT THE MAN CAME AND SOWED THE SEEDS IN THE FIELD. BECAUSE YOU SEE, THE DAYTIME, WHEN MEN CAN BE SEEN, IS NOT A TIME WHICH IS CONDUCTIVE TO THE DOING OF EVIL. SIN IS A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE AND THEREFORE MUST BE CHARACTERIZED BY SUBTLETY.

NOT SO WITH THOSE WHO WOULD ACCOMPLISH GOOD. WHEN MEN WOULD ACCOMPLISH THAT WHICH IS GOOD, WHEN THEY SEEK TO BUILD UP AND NOT TO DESTROY, THEY MAY BE OPEN, THEY MAY BE ABOVE BOARD, THEY MAY BE HONEST, AND THEY MAY BE SINCERE IN ALL THEIR DEALINGS WITH MEN.

THE SPECIAL DECEIT WHICH IS EMPHASIZED IN OUR PASSAGE HERE REFERS TO THE WAY THAT SIN HAS OF AFFECTING A MAN'S WILL, THE WAY THAT SIN HAS OF AFFECTING A MAN'S PURPOSE, THE WAY THAT SIN HAS OF AFFECTING A MAN'S HEART IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS RELIGIOUS LIFE. FOR WHEN A MAN HAS BECOME A CHRISTIAN, WHEN A MAN IS A PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD, WE CAN SAY A NUMBER OF THINGS ABOUT HIM, BUT PERHAPS WE CAN SUMMARIZE THAT WHICH HAS TRANSPIRED WITH THIS OBSERVATION--WHEN A MAN BECOMES A CHILD OF GOD, SELF-INTEREST HAS BEEN DETHRONED AND

CHRIST-INTEREST HAS BEEN ENTHRONED IN HIS HEART, IN OTHER WORDS WHEN A MAN BECOMES A CHRISTIAN, JESUS CHRIST RULES AND REIGNS IN HIS LIFE. NOW IT IS THE WORK OF EVIL THROUGH SUBTLETY AND DECEIT TO COME AGAIN INTO THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN, AND TO PERSUADE HIM THAT THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH HIS INDULGING HIS OWN INTERESTS, THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH PUTTING CHRIST ASIDE FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE. AND THEN IT IS NOT LONG UNTIL CHRIST, HAVING BEEN PUT ASIDE FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IS PUT ASIDE ALTOGETHER. CHRIST HAS BEEN TAKEN OFF THE THRONE AND SELF HAS BEEN PUT BACK ON THE THRONE AND MAN IS BACK JUST EXACTLY WHERE HE WAS BEFORE HE BECAME A CHILD OF GOD.

NOW WE ASK AGAIN, HOW CAN THIS HAPPEN? HOW CAN A MAN BE DECEIVED INTO LIVING A LIFE OF SIN? HOW CAN A MAN THAT HAS LEFT SIN AND COME INTO JESUS CHRIST BE DECEIVED INTO GOING BACK INTO SIN? I THINK THE ONLY ANSWER IS THAT THERE ARE JUST SOME THINGS THAT THE SINNER DOES NOT UNDERSTAND. THE SINNER DOES UNDERSTAND THAT THE PLEASURES OF SIN ARE SLIGHT, EVEN WHILE THEY LAST. HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THAT THESE PROMISES WHICH ARE HELD OUT ARE BUT EMPTY AND THAT LIKE THE BUBBLES THAT FLOAT UPON THE BREEZE, THE MOMENT THAT YOU REACH OUT TO LAY HOLD UPON THEM, THEY BURST AND VANISH BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES. THE SINNER DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THE PLEASURES OF SIN ARE FLEETING, THAT THEY DIE OUT AS TIME GOES ON, AND THAT EVEN WHEN THEY ARE INDULGED AND FOR A WHILE THEY SATISFY, SOON THAT SATISFACTION IS GONE AND A MAN COMES TO LOATH THAT WHICH HE IN THE BEGINNING SOUGHT TO INDULGE. SURELY WE HAVE OBSERVED THIS AS WE HAVE SEEN THOSE WHO LIVE SENSUAL LIVES, GIVING THEMSELVES OVER TO PERSUIT OF THE THINGS THAT PERTAIN TO THE BASER NATURE OF MAN. SUCH A SENSUALIST HAS ALWAYS CRIED OUT FOR EVER GREATER AND GREATER PLEASURES. YET HE HAS APPARENTLY NEVER BEEN ABLE TO SATISFY HIS LUSTS. HE LOATHES THAT WHICH HE HAS ENJOYED AND SEEKS THAT WHICH IS NOVEL. HE DOES NOT KNOW THAT "HE THAT LOVETH PLEASURES SHALL BE A POOR MAN." HE DOES NOT KNOW THAT THE WAY TO ENJOY THE GOOD THINGS, EITHER OF THIS LIFE, OR THE LIFE THAT IS TO COME, IS NOT TO BE FOUND IN THE PERSUIT OF EARTHLY PLEASURES.

THE SINNER DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THAT THE PLEASURES OF SIN ARE EMPTY PROMISES WHICH ARE MADE TO BE BROKEN. SIN, WHEN IT SITS DOWN WITH US AT THE BARGAINING TABLE PROMISES US A LIFE OF PLEASURE AND PROFIT AND SO WE CONTRACT WITH SIN. BUT THEN COMES THE TIME FOR THE WAGES OF SIN TO BE PAID AND THE WAGES OF SIN HAVE NEVER BEEN PLEASURE AND PROFIT. THE WAGES OF SIN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DEATH AND ETERNAL RUIN. SIN, YOU SEE, HAS TWO ASPECTS. ONE ASPECT OF SIN IS THE SIDE THAT SIN PRESENTS TO US WHEN SHE IS TRYING TO ENTICE US INTO HER TRAP. THE OTHER SIDE OF SIN IS THAT SIDE OF SIN WHICH WE SEE WHEN WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN ENSNARED. SIN IS MUCH LIKE Jael of whom we read in the fourth chapter of Judges. REMEMBER HOW THE ARMIES HAD BEEN PUT TO FLIGHT BY DEBORAH AND BARAK, AND SISERA WAS FLEEING BEFORE ARMIES OF ISRAEL. HE PASSED BY THE TENT OF Jael AND HE WAS BIDDEN BY Jael TO COME IN, AND HE SOUGHT SAFETY WITH HER. HE SAID THAT IF ANYBODY CAME BY LOOKING FOR A MAN YOU TELL HIM THAT HE HASN'T BEEN BY. SHE SAID, "YES, I'LL DO THAT VERY THING," AND SHE GAVE HIM, THOUGH HE ASKED ONLY FOR WATER, A BOWL OF MILK. HE, BEING TIRED FROM THE STRENOUS EXERCISE OF BATTLE, LAID DOWN IN THE TENT OF Jael AND WENT TO SLEEP. WHILE HE SLEPT, Jael GOT A PEG AND A HAMMER AND PUT IT TO HIS TEMPLE AND DROVE IT INTO THE EARTH BENEATH AND LITERALLY NAILED HIM TO THE GROUND! THAT'S WHAT SIN DOES WITH US. SIN LULLS US TO SLEEP WITH A BOWL OF MILK. SIN PROMISES TO GIVE US THE CREAM OF LIFE, BUT NO SOONER HAVE WE GONE TO SLEEP IN THE PRESENCE OF SIN THAN SIN TAKES A PEG AND DRIVES IT THROUGH OUR TEMPLES AND NAILS US TO THE VERY FLOOR OF THE PIT OF HELL. HOW MUSICAL, NOW MUSICAL IN THE EARS OF JUDAS WAS THE JINGLING OF THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER WHEN THEY WERE STILL IN THE PURSE OF THE HIGH PRIESTS. BUT HOW DULL WAS THEIR THUD WHEN JUDAS THREW THEM DOWN AGAIN AT THE FEET OF THE HIGH PRIEST, WHEN THE SHINY APPEARANCE OF THOSE COINS HAD BEEN TAINTED BY INNOCENT BLOOD.

YES, SIN HAS TWO ASPECTS. THE ONE SHE PRESENTS BEFORE WE ARE ENTICED AND THE OTHER WE SEE WHEN WE HAVE BEEN DUPED INTO COMMITTING SIN. BACK DURING THE PERIOD OF OUR HISTORY KNOWN AS THE DARK AGES, WHEN THE INQUISITION WAS IN FORCE, THERE WAS IN THE HALL OF THE INQUISITION A STATUE OF A VIRGIN. IT WAS A VERY BEAUTIFUL THING. ALL OF THE ABILITIES OF THE ARTIFICERS HAD BEEN USED TO CREATE IT. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF SCULPTURE. IT WAS BEAUTIFUL TO BEHOLD, AND WHEN THE PENITENT WOULD BE BROUGHT INTO THE HALL OF INQUISITION, HE WOULD BE TOLD TO GO AND EMBRACE THE STATUE OF THE VIRGIN AS AN EXPRESSION OF HIS PENITENCE. WHEN HE DID, HE DISCOVERED TO HIS REGRET THAT THE ARMS OF THIS STATUE ENFOLDED HIM, NOT IN A CLASP OF LOVE, BUT IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP OF VENGEANCE. HE DISCOVERED THAT THE BOSOM OF THE STATUE OPENED UP AND A HUNDRED GLEAMING KNIVES WOULD SHOOT INTO HIS BREAST. HE DISCOVERED THAT THE MOUTH WOULD OPEN AND THERE WOULD BE A BARBED TONGUE AND SHARP TEETH TO LACERATE AND TO TEAR. THEN THE BEAUTIFUL STATUE WOULD DROP ITS VICTIM'S LIFELESS BODY AT ITS FEET. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT SIN DOES TO US AND A SINNER JUST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND IT. HE LOOKS AT THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE SCULPTURE AND SEES ITS BEAUTY, AND IS NOT ABLE TO SEE THAT WHEN WE TRIFLE WITH SIN THAT THE BEAUTY BECOMES A BEAST. THIS IS THE REASON THAT IT IS ALWAYS WISE FOR US TO HEED THE EXHORTATION OF THE SCRIPTURE, "WHEN SINNERS ENTICE THEE, CONSENT THOU NOT."

THE SINNER JUST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THAT SIN SEPARATES FROM GOD. HERE THE PROPHET ISAIAH, CHAPTER 59, VERSES 1, 2. "BEHOLD, THE LORD'S HAND IS NOT SHORTENED, THAT IT CANNOT SAVE; NEITHER HIS EAR HEAVY, THAT IT CANNOT HEAR; BUT YOUR INIQUITIES HAVE SEPARATED BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR GOD, AND YOUR SINS HAVE HID HIS FACE FROM YOU, THAT HE WILL NOT HEAR." WERE THE PLEASURES OF SIN 10,000 TIMES GREATER THAN THEY ARE, AND WERE THE PLEASURES PERMANENT INSTEAD OF TEMPORARY, YET WOULD ALL OF THE PLEASURES OF SIN NOT BE WORTH WHAT SIN DOES TO A MAN AS DESCRIBED IN THE WORDS OF ISAIAH. FOR ALL OF THE PLEASURES THAT SIN HAS TO OFFER ARE NOT WORTH THE BARRIER THAT THAT SIN AND ITS ENJOYMENT ERECT BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS GOD.

TO BE CUT OFF FROM GOD IS TO BE CUT OFF FROM THE SOURCE OF ALL JOY; TO BE CUT OFF FROM GOD IS TO BE CUT OFF FROM ALL HAPPINESS; TO BE CUT OFF FROM GOD IS TO BE LEFT WITH OUR OWN MISERABLE SELVES, AND TO BE ABLE TO HAVE NOTHING DONE FOR US BUT THAT WHICH WE ARE ABLE TO DO. THERE IS NO PLEASURE, NO MATTER HOW GREAT OR PERMANENT, RELATED TO SIN THAT CAN COMPENSATE FOR SUCH A LOSS AS THIS. THERE'S NOTHING THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER, THAT CAN COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF GOD BY THE SOUL OF MAN.

THEN HOW CAN WE STAY AWAY FROM SIN? I KNOW NOT WHY WE MUST ASK THE QUESTION. WHEN WE SEE THOSE THINGS THAT ARE DANGEROUS IN LIFE WE DON'T NEED TO ASK HOW WE CAN STAY AWAY FROM THEM. WE'VE JUST GOT ENOUGH SENSE NOT TO GO NEAR. WHY IS IT THAT WE SEEMINGLY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SENSE TO STAY AWAY FROM SIN. HAVE WE NO GREATER REASONING CAPACITY, HAVE WE NO GREATER INTELLECT THAN THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD TO WHOM THE GRASS LOOKS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE? SURELY MAN IS NOT SO DULL! THE MAN WHO DOESN'T WANT TO FALL INTO THE WATER UNDERSTANDS THAT HE HAD BETTER NOT GO TOO NEAR THE RIVERBANK. THE MAN WHO'S CARRYING A LOAD OF GUN POWDER KNOWS THAT HE CAN'T STAY FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM THE FIRE. THE MAN WHO DOESN'T WANT TO DRINK OF THE WINE OF WRATH HAD BETTER LEAVE THE CUP OF PLEASURE ALONE. THE MAN WHO DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR THE BELL OF ETERNAL DEATH HAD BETTER NOT BE PULLING ON THE ROPE OF SIN. IT WORKS IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS JUST EXACTLY LIKE IT WORKS IN MATTERS PHYSICAL. IT'S TIME WE LEARNED THAT IF WE GO WITH SIN ONE MILE IT'S GOING TO COMPEL US TO GO WITH IT TWO. IT'S TIME WE LEARNED THAT SIN COMES UP IN OUR LIFE LIKE ELIJAH'S RAINCLOUD, AT FIRST SO SMALL IT CAN HARDLY BE SEEN, BUT IT INCREASES UNTIL IT COVERS OUR ENTIRE SKY.

IN ONE SECTION OF OUR WORLD THERE IS A SPECIES OF EAGLE WHICH ATTACKS THE SEAL. IT SWOOPS DOWN OUT OF THE SKY AND PLANTS ITS TALONS IN THE SEAL, AND BY THE MIGHTY FLAPPING OF ITS WINGS DRAGS IT TO SHORE WHERE IT THERE CONSUMES IT. BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, ONE OF THESE EAGLES MAKES A MISTAKE. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE ONE OF THESE EAGLES GET HOLD OF A SEAL BIGGER THAN HE THOUGHT IT WAS, AND THE SEAL IS THE VICTOR, NOT THE EAGLE. THE SEAL DIVES TO THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN AND THE EAGLE, UNABLE TO EXTRACT ITS TALONS FROM THE HIDE OF THE SEAL IS DRAGGED TO THE DEPTHS AND DROWNED. THIS IS THE WAY WE ARE WITH SIN. WE LOOK DOWN FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT AND IT LOOKS SMALL. WE THINK WE MAY SWOOP DOWN UPON IT AND PLANT OUR TALONS IN IT AND DRAG IT TO SHORE AND ENJOY IT. HOW MANY OF US, AND HOW MANY OF OUR LOVED ONES HAVE DISCOVERED THAT WE HAVE TAKEN HOLD OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN WE CAN CONTROL, AND IT HAS DRAGGED US DOWN TO THE VERY DEPTHS OF PERDITION AND WE ARE LOST. MEN MAY LAY HOLD OF SINFUL PLEASURE EXPECTING TO MASTER IT, BUT HOW MANY TIMES HAVE THEY INSTEAD BEEN MASTERED BY THEIR SINS. "WHEN SINNERS ENTICE THEE, CONSENT THOU NOT," FOR SIN WILL DESTROY.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN--ARE YOU LIVING IN IT TONIGHT? IT MAY BE THAT IN YOUR LIFE YOU HAVE COME DOWN UPON SIN AND EVEN AT THIS MOMENT THERE'S A GREAT STRUGGLE GOING ON TO SEE WHETHER IT WILL DRAG YOU TO THE DEPTHS OR YOU WILL DRAG IT TO THE SHORE, UNLESS MAN LETS GO OF SIN THERE'S NO DOUBT WHICH IS GOING TO BE THE VICTOR. SIN IS POWERFUL. MAN CAN'T, WITHOUT JESUS CHRIST, REALLY RESIST IT AND OVERCOME IT. TONIGHT I CHALLENGE YOU TO LET GO OF THAT SIN. I CHALLENGE YOU TO LET IT DROP BACK DOWN TO THE DEPTHS. AND I CHALLENGE YOU TO FLY AGAIN TO THE HEAVENS WHERE DWELLS JESUS CHRIST AND TO LET JESUS CHRIST GIVE YOU THOSE THINGS WHICH WILL SUSTAIN YOUR SOUL, TO LET JESUS CHRIST GIVE YOU THE STRENGTH YOU NEED TO OVERCOME AND BE VICTORIOUS IN THE AFTERWHILE. THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE TORN TONIGHT BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL. WE'RE PLEADING WITH YOU TO MAKE YOUR CHOICE JESUS, TO MAKE IT NOW, WHILE WE STAND AND SING.