

THE SIN WE REFUSE TO NAME

Why the Gospel Divides Humanity Not by Identity, but by Mercy

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Introduction: A Mirror, Not a Target

Christians often speak confidently about sin. We debate it, categorize it, rank it, and—at times—assign it to others with great clarity. Yet the gospel does not invite us to become observers of sin in the lives of others. It invites us to stand exposed before God.

The most dangerous sin in Scripture is not always the most visible one. It is the sin that convinces us we are standing outside the need for mercy. When the Church isolates a particular group as *the* example of sin, it does not merely wound that group—it quietly steps away from the gospel itself.

This reflection does not aim to defend or condemn any particular community. It aims to place a mirror before every reader and ask a far more searching question: ***Do I know that I need mercy?***

The Real Divide the Gospel Names

The gospel does not divide humanity into the righteous and the unrighteous, the moral and the immoral, or the acceptable and the unacceptable. It draws a deeper and more unsettling line:

- **Those who know they need mercy**
- **Those who think they don't**

This is the divide Jesus exposes again and again in the Gospels. It cuts across every social, religious, and moral category. It unsettles the confident and comforts the broken.

Scripture leaves no ambiguity:

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
— Romans 3:23

This confession levels the ground beneath us. There is no elevated platform from which one group may diagnose another while remaining untouched themselves. Everyone who approaches Christ does so empty-handed.

Why We Keep Isolating “The Sinner”

Despite this clarity, the Church repeatedly falls into a familiar pattern: identifying a particular group as the visible embodiment of sin. At different moments in history, this role has been assigned to the poor, the foreigner, the sexually immoral, the politically suspect, or the culturally unfamiliar.

This pattern is tempting because it offers relief. If sin can be located *over there*, then righteousness can be quietly assumed *over here*. But this move subtly transforms the gospel from a confession into a comparison.

The moment we isolate one group as *the* example of sin, something crucial has already shifted. Sin is no longer a shared human condition; it becomes a defining feature of “them.” Grace is no longer the ground on which we stand; it becomes a resource we distribute.

That is not the gospel Jesus preached.

When Clarity Is Required

At this point, clarity is necessary—because silence is too easily filled with assumption.

Some readers will instinctively apply the category of “sinner” most forcefully to LGBTQ persons, particularly lesbians and homosexuals, because certain forms of same-sex sexual behavior are named in Scripture, including in Romans. That is a real textual fact, and it should not be denied or minimized.

But Scripture does not grant permission to **isolate one category of people as the defining example of sin**, nor does it authorize a hierarchy in which some sins justify contempt while others invite patience.

The same Scriptures that name sexual sin also name drunkenness, greed, slander, pride, and lack of mercy—often with equal or greater frequency. Yet the Church has historically responded very differently to these sins. The drunk is often treated as broken and redeemable. The greedy are excused as successful. The proud are admired as confident. Meanwhile, LGBTQ persons are frequently treated not simply as sinners in need of grace, but as symbols of cultural decay.

This disparity is not biblical. It is selective.

Scripture does not teach that being a lesbian or a homosexual person places a person outside the reach of Christ’s mercy any more than being a drunk, an adulterer, or a self-righteous religious leader. Nor does Scripture teach that repentance is demanded of some sinners before relationship while others are invited gently over time.

Scripture itself resists moral hierarchy. When the Apostle Paul names sin, he does so in a way that places every reader under the same judgment—and the same mercy:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
— 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (ESV)

The problem before the Church today is not that certain sins are being named. It is that **one group of sinners is being named as if they exhaust the meaning of sin**, while others are quietly normalized or excused.

When this happens, the Church is no longer proclaiming repentance—it is practicing comparison. And comparison always produces either pride or despair, never transformation.

God’s Design, Human Deviation, and the Work of Restoration

It must be said plainly: when a person—whether heterosexual or homosexual—is living in a sexually sinful relationship, they are not walking according to God’s design. Scripture does not leave God’s intentions for human sexuality ambiguous, and faithfulness requires honesty about where certain paths lead.

But deviation from God’s plan does not place a person outside of God’s love. Love is not withdrawn because obedience is incomplete. God’s posture toward sinners has never been rejection, but restoration.

The Church therefore bears a serious responsibility. Our calling is not to condemn those who have departed from God’s design, nor to redefine that design to relieve discomfort. It is to **embrace people as persons bearing God’s image**, and through love, mercy, patience, and truth, walk with them toward the healing and restoration God desires.

Restoration is God’s work, not ours. We do not coerce repentance, manage outcomes, or dictate timelines. We bear witness to what leads to life, we remain present in love, and we trust the Spirit to do what only the Spirit can do. Anything less reduces grace to sentimentality; anything more replaces grace with control.

God’s plan is not revealed in our fallen desires, but in His patient work of restoration.

Jesus and the Two Camps

Jesus consistently reveals that proximity to sin does not determine one’s distance from God. What determines it is posture.

In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14), both men are sinners. But only one knows it. The Pharisee names the sins of others; the tax collector names his own need for mercy. Jesus is unambiguous about which posture leads to justification.

Throughout the Gospels, those who recognize their need for mercy—tax collectors, prostitutes, outcasts, and the broken—often move toward Jesus with openness. Those who believe they stand apart from sin often move away from Him in defensiveness.

The dividing line is not moral behavior. It is **humility**.

The Cost of Moral Hierarchy

This is why selectively naming sin is spiritually dangerous. When the Church emphasizes certain sins while remaining quiet about others—especially sins that are culturally respectable, religiously camouflaged, or personally familiar—it creates a moral hierarchy Scripture does not support.

Pride, self-righteousness, misuse of power, and lack of mercy receive some of the strongest warnings in the New Testament. Yet these sins are often the least confessed, precisely because they disguise themselves as virtue.

The gospel does not permit us to confess Romans 3:23 in theory while exempting ourselves in practice.

What Faithful Teaching Must Recover

Faithful Christian teaching does not begin by asking, “*Which group needs repentance most?*” It begins by asking, “*Where have we forgotten our own need for mercy?*”

Only from within that confession can sin be named truthfully—because it is named as fellow sinners, not as moral supervisors. This does not erase moral conviction. It restores its credibility.

Repentance in Scripture is not coerced by condemnation; it is awakened by grace.

“God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.”
— Romans 2:4

A Necessary Warning to the Church

“The Church’s greatest danger has never been proximity to sinners.” Jesus did that freely and without fear. The greater danger is losing sight of the gospel by mistaking moral clarity for spiritual standing.

Whenever the Church forgets that it lives by mercy alone, it risks becoming fluent in judgment and impoverished in grace.

The question before us is not whether sin exists. Scripture has already answered that. The question is whether we will live as those who know they need mercy—or as those who believe it is meant for others.

Conclusion: The Mirror Remains

The gospel does not allow us to stand outside it as analysts. It draws us in as participants. Every reader must decide where they stand—not in relation to another group, but before God.

There are only two camps:

- Those who know they need mercy
- Those who think they don't

And the good news is this: **mercy is abundant for the first, but inaccessible to the second—until the illusion breaks.**