



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 18: Death of a Conscience

Mark 6:14-29

1. A Guilty Conscience Is A Terrifying Thing That Is Supposed To Lead Us To Repentance

- Read Mark 6:14-16

Herod was guilty of beheading John the Baptist and admitted it, but he refused to fall down on his knees in honest repentance.

2. Hearing About Your Sin Without Responding In Repentance Does Nothing To Relieve A Guilty Conscience

- Read Mark 6:17-20

Herod's heart was open to the truth of hearing about his sin. He resonated with John's message, but his love for his sin was stronger than his desire to put it to death.

- ❖ Q: Why did Herod keep listening to John the Baptist even though he constantly told him that his marriage to Herodias was wrong?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think Herod did not repent and make changes to his situation?
- ❖ Q: Why do some of us keep coming back to church week after week to hear strong messages about turning from sin, then reflect and talk about it with one another, but yet we still do not repent?

3. Sin Unchecked Leads To Sin In Increasing Measure

- Read Mark 6:21-25

As Herod was a married man, his marriage to Herodias was totally off-limits. But on top of that, she was married to his half-brother. John the Baptist rebuked Herod for his unlawful marriage and was thrown into jail for it. Then, in a night of drunken debauchery, Herod was put on the spot and ended up making the most sinful decision of his life, agreeing to have John beheaded. Had he listened to his conscience earlier and put sin to death, he would not have found himself in this position.

4. Grief Over Sin Doesn't Equal Repentance

- Read Mark 6:26a

Herod was broken by the situation and did not want to have John killed. But he still didn't stop and just continued in steps of disobedience. Many of us are greatly distressed over our sin too but we have no intention of stopping either, despite how grieved we feel.

5. Freedom From Sin Won't Be Experienced While We Still Care Deeply About What Others Think Of Us

- Read Mark 6:26b

Herod was in a tough position. If he chose to change now, the public humiliation would reach the ears of the powers in Rome, which would not go down well. In the battle between wanting to please God and wanting to please people, Herod chose to please people and rejected the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness. Many of us choose the road of acceptance too and as a result we remain trapped in our sin.

- ❖ Q: Why does unchecked sin lead to sin in increasing measure?
- ❖ Q: Why is grief over sin not the same as repentance? Can you give an example of this in your own life? (e.g. You feel terrible about gossiping about your friend but a few days later, you gossip about someone else. You know it's wrong but you love the feeling of airing your frustrations with others and so although you don't want to hurt people, you override your conscience and continue).
- ❖ Q: Why is our need for approval from others such a barrier to freedom from our own sin?
- ❖ Q: How does it help us to put our sin into the light and confess it to others? Do you think that doing this is enough for us to change?
- ❖ Q: Has God highlighted a specific sin that he wants you to turn from that feels impossible because of what other people may think of you?
- ❖ Q: Are you willing to allow your sin to snowball because of other people's opinions of you?





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6. For Followers Of Christ The Best Is Yet To Come

- Read Mark 6:27-29

John's life ended horrifically and yet Jesus called him the greatest man that ever lived (Matt 11.11). Herod experienced every earthly indulgence but lost it all in eternity. John, on the other hand, suffered as a follower of God, and yet gained great reward for all eternity. Our hope is not in the here-and-now, it is in heaven. This reality frees us from needing all of our desires met on earth and frees us from needing constant affirmation from people. God wants us to reveal heaven to people by being merciful, just and kind to others.

- ❖ Q: Why is it important for us to see that John was better off than Herod, despite how meagre his means were and how horrific his death was?
- ❖ Q: Why do we as Christians struggle so much with getting caught up in living for the here-and-now?
- ❖ Q: We are not all called to be martyrs and live in the desert like John the Baptist but we are called to live with a heavenly perspective. What do you think a life lived in this way would look like?
- ❖ Q: If you were to personally shift your focus to an eternal one, which dreams, goals or material possessions that you are striving for at the moment would you let go of and why?

7. An Unchecked Conscience Will Lead To Resistance Towards Christ And Ultimate Separation From Him

Even though Herod initially battled with his sinful decisions, it wasn't long before his heart had become hardened towards God. When Jesus was put before him, he was not moved or stirred at all, and instead mocked him, not recognizing that God was standing before him. Sinclair Ferguson says of this passage, *"The lesson is crystal clear. Unless we silence sin, sin will silence conscience. Unless we heed God's word, the day may come when we despise God's Son..."*

- ❖ Q: Why is it so important to obey God the first time he speaks to us about our sin?
- ❖ Q: Why is it important to root out the sins we don't think are such a big deal?
- ❖ Q: How should we as a Gospel Community respond to this message? What are some of the 'take-aways' for us to work through during the week?

