



How Will You Respond to the Message of Jesus?

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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Introduction:

I have some bad news for you. **Romans 3:23** says we have all sinned. **Romans 3:10-18** demonstrates that because we have sinned, we have been pretty bad people. **Ephesians 2:1-3** says that because of our sinning we have become children of wrath like everyone else in the world. **Isaiah 59:1-2** explains the real tragedy of our sins is that it separates us from God. And this leads us to **Romans 6:23**. The wages of our sins is death. This is a spiritual death, a complete, final, and eternal separation from God. But, there is a message of hope in this last verse as well. God has a gift for us. That gift is eternal life. The Bible is filled with the message of eternal life that can be found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone (**Acts 4:12**). Jesus' message is that we must enter in through His narrow gate and His difficult way, because that leads to life (**Matthew 7:13-14**). His message is one of surrender, turning our lives completely over to Him, walking by faith in Him (**Galatians 2:20**). The big question is how will we respond to this message? Basically, we have four options. Which one will you choose?

Discussion:

I. Denial

- A. You can deny the message. Some people just refuse to accept the message. They deny that sin matters, or they deny that they have actually sinned like God is saying. This denial may take the form of denying God's existence (cf. **Psalms 14:1**). But I'm more concerned with those who accept God's existence but deny His message about their sins.
- B. Consider some examples. In **Luke 7:36-50**, we read the account of a Pharisee and a sinful woman. The sinful woman recognized her sinfulness. The Pharisee denied his. No doubt he would admit that he had sinned. I don't think any Jews viewed themselves as perfect any more than any of us do. But, because his sins were not as bad as the sinful woman's he denied his need for anything from Jesus. Then there is the other Pharisee in **Luke 18:9-14**. Granted, this fellow is a made up character by Jesus. However, Jesus knew the Pharisees better than they knew themselves. This Pharisee denied his sinfulness and his need for grace from God. I find it profound that the very sins he claims to be innocent of, extortion, injustice, and adultery are the very things Jesus rebukes in various places. In **Luke 20:47**, Jesus claimed the Pharisees perpetrated the worst form of extortion, devouring widow's houses. In **Luke 11:42**, Jesus claimed the Pharisees neglected justice. In **Matthew 5:27-29**, Jesus demonstrated that while the Pharisees may have kept away from actual adultery, they were filled with adulterous thinking on the inside (cf. **Luke 11:39-41**). This is denial.
- C. If we get caught up in denial, we will miss exactly what our sins have done to us and the only answer to them. Sin has killed us and will destroy our eternity. We can deny it all day long, but it doesn't change the truth. Your sins have separated you from God. If you go into eternity separated from Him, you will be separate from Him throughout eternity. We call that hell.

II. Disregard

- A. Some don't deny the message. Rather, they realize how important the message is. They believe the message. They know their sins are a travesty. They want something done about them. They just don't like what the message asks of them. They want an easier, softer way than completely surrendering to Jesus Christ.
- B. Consider the rich young ruler of **Matthew 19:16-22**. He wanted eternal life. It was extremely important to him. It was so important to him he had tried to keep all of God's commands in order to attain it. But Jesus highlights that he actually fell short. He had kept something between him and God—money. He was going to have to give that up if he wanted to be near Jesus and have eternal life. But the message was too much for him. So he went away sorrowing. He decided his material goods on earth were more important than being near Jesus and eternal life. He disregarded the message.
- C. This is like Naaman, the Syrian commander, when he initially heard the message of healing from Elisha's messenger in **II Kings 5:10-12**. He disregarded the message because it hadn't been delivered with proper respect and honor. He disregarded the message because it wasn't what he expected to hear. But when he disregarded the message, what happened to his leprosy? Absolutely nothing. Only when his servant convinced him to regard the message was his leprosy healed (**II Kings 5:14**).

- D. Many today disregard the message. Either they just can't imagine it as being that important or they can't imagine God would really live by His message. Or they decide something is really more important than being near Jesus. Or they think they have time to worry about it later. Or they prefer a religion that says if they go to church a certain number of times and read their Bible so much and get so many doctrines right that is all they need. They can't fathom that God would actually ask to be first in their lives. They can't fathom that the only necessary thing is knowing Jesus and therefore making that the primary objective in their lives (**Philippians 3:3-11**). They simply disregard the message and they stay in their sins.

III. Despair

- A. Some can't deny the message. They know it is true. Their sins are ever before them and over their heads. They also don't disregard the message. At least not in the same way as we were discussing in the previous point. Rather, they simply turn to despair. They cannot fathom that God could ever forgive their sins. Or they despair that they could never actually surrender to Jesus Christ. They believe they are hopelessly lost in and sold over to sin such that they will never have victory.
- B. Of course, the greatest example of this is Judas. When he faced his sin against Jesus, he obviously couldn't fathom forgiveness. He couldn't fathom victory. So he hanged himself (**Matthew 27:3-5**). He despaired despite the message of Jesus that he had heard for three years. Of course, not everyone who despairs like this kill themselves. Many just give themselves over to more sin. They are like Paul in **Romans 7:14-24**. The problem is they never get to where Paul did in **Romans 7:25**. They linger in the despair and never see the deliverance in Jesus Christ. They simply cannot fathom that in Christ, God will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish them (**1 Peter 5:10**). Of course, some of these do their best to serve the Lord, but still live in the despair that they aren't going to make it. That is a sad place to be.

IV. Discipleship

- A. The only life-giving option is discipleship. We must not deny the message. We are sinners. Our sins have separated us from God. We must not disregard the message. Knowing Jesus is the only way to life. Nothing else will work. And nothing else is so important. We need not despair. God has provided the solution in Jesus Christ (**Romans 8:1**). But, of course, we must be in Jesus Christ.
- B. Look again at **Philippians 3:3-16**. We must not put confidence in the flesh. We must not put confidence in ourselves. We must not put our confidence in our abilities. We must put our confidence in Jesus Christ. With our faith and confidence placed firmly in Him, we spend our days drawing closer to Him. We spend our time in His Word. We spend our time in prayer. We spend our time with His people. We spend our time following the lead of His Spirit. As we do so, His fruit develops in our lives (cf. **Galatians 5:22-23**). We do not sit back doing nothing, but we push forward, pressing on for the prize, working out our salvation (**Philippians 2:12-13**). But we can continue working in our discipleship because we know that God is working in us. We know that He is going to grow us to be like Jesus. Yes, we'll mess up. Yes, we'll blow it. Yes, we'll revert back to our sins sometimes. But we know that God is on our side. We know that He is working on us. We trust His effective power to make us like Jesus, so we pick up our cross again, put our hand in His, and put our faith in Him to save us (cf. **Romans 8:28-30**).

Conclusion:

The question is how will you respond to Jesus? Will you deny His message? Will you disregard His message? Will you despair despite His message? Or will you become His disciple because of His message? In **Matthew 28:19-20**, Jesus explained that we are made disciples through baptism and teaching. If you want to be Jesus' disciple, why not be baptized into Him and into His death today?