

# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## The Path to Rebellion, Part 6

### The Folly of Sin

When it comes to explaining the actions of the non-Christian, Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4 are quite helpful.

2 Corinthians 4:4, "In whom **the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not**, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

This explains why the non-Christian can be so irrational when it comes to the things of the Lord; why he can so easily sin! And yet, what excuse does the child of God have when he sins because his eyes are not blinded?

The words of Jeremiah are of help here,

Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Truly, though we have been saved by grace, nevertheless our heart still is able to be deceived. And that explains why deep acts of devotion can be followed by such shallow acts of rebellion. Now though we profess this, nevertheless it still is shocking to behold the foolish choices made on the part of the people of God throughout redemptive history. For example, Judas was present when Christ warned that one of the disciples would betray Him. After John asked Christ to reveal the identity of the one who would betray Him we read this:

John 13:26, "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."

One would think that after this display, Judas would have been paralyzed; not willing to go anywhere. And yet right after receiving the morsel, he got up in front of everybody, walked out the door, and betrayed the Lord.

Or how about Peter?

Peter told Christ, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matthew 26:33). To which Christ said, “Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice” (Matthew 26:34). And Peter did deny Christ. Just a few hours later he stood by a camp fire in full view of Christ and denied the Lord to His face! Brothers and sisters, I know our hearts are deceitful, but this is plain stupidity!

- How is it that we can be so blind?
- Why in all the world do we sin when we know better?
- How is it that deep acts of devotion can be followed by shallow acts of rebellion?

Our text continues to provide us with the answers to these questions. Even though Samuel gave some brutal warnings regarding the people's sin, nevertheless they proceeded in their rebellion against God. It is here that we find reasons as to why acts of rebellion follow deep acts of devotion. Last time we saw that Rebellion against the Lord begins with callousness to the Word of God.<sup>1</sup> Now the second element is that we are blinded by lust.

## Blinding by our Lust

1 Samuel 8:19, “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us.”

This is a most amazing sin. Recall the context. The people of God were moved by the cause of justice. Throughout this chapter they have raised this issue and it is their primary focus. The words rendered *justice* (שֹׁפֵט shaphat, and מִשְׁפָּט mishpat) are used seven times in this chapter.

- Joel and Abijah were appointed as *judges*.<sup>2</sup> (1 Samuel 8:1-2)
- Yet they perverted *justice*!<sup>3</sup> (! Samuel 8:3)
- Now it was this that prompted the elders to throw off God that they might have an earthly king who would *judge* them (give them justice) according to their longing. (1 Samuel 8:5, 6, 20)
- Samuel bore witness as to the *procedure* or *manner* [literally the justice] of the king who [would] reign over [them]. (1 Samuel 8:11)

After 1 Samuel 8:11 Samuel listed the consequences of their sin. And I do not shy away from repeating this list again and again that we might always remember the toll that sin may exact from us.

What is The Cost — the Justice — associated with sin in the life of the believer?

- One or more of our children could be lost.
- That which God has given as a foretaste of glory, our property and prosperity, could become sour and yield no kingdom benefit.
- We may become unproductive when it comes to the things that really matter.
- Our worship may be compromised.
- And though our delight and joy is the service of God, we will become the servant of sin.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 8:10-11

<sup>2</sup> שֹׁפֵט shaphat

<sup>3</sup> מִשְׁפָּט mishpat

Now Samuel has just given this dire warning, a warning which would frighten any healthy Christian. And yet we read here that “the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel” (1 Samuel 8:19).

How can this be? How could any child of God read a list like this and NOT be cut to the quick, sobered, and burdened all the more for righteousness? How could someone who knows Christ turn a deaf ear to Samuel's warning?

The answer is found in the text.

1 Samuel 8:19, “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us.”

Was their reason for saying this, the right reason? So that

- Justice might prevail in the land?
- Israel might more effectively honor God?
- All the world might have a glimpse of the Messianic Kingdom of Christ?
- God's people might be safe and secure in the covenant?
- God's Kingdom might come; His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven?

All of these would be the divine rationale behind the Davidic Kingdom prophesied in Deuteronomy 17:14-17. But that was not what moved the people here. NO! They completely ignored the warning of God as it related to their sin because of this reason:

1 Samuel 8:20, “**That we also may be like all the nations;** and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.”

With this we are brought into the light! How could these people be so foolish as to persist in their sin after so dire a warning? They were blinded by their lust. They longed to be like the nations around them!

Now brothers and sisters, it doesn't take a brain surgeon to divine what about the nations the people wanted. Let us just consider other portions of Scripture where a child of God is found longing for the life afforded by the nations.

## **Psalm 37**

Psalm 37 is an acrostic psalm in which David opens with the calling “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity” (Psalm 37:1).

Well what about the evildoer is there to envy? David goes on to tell us.

- Their prosperity, verse 7.
- Their arrogant way, verse 11.
- Their ruthless domination, verse 14.
- Their abundance, verse 16.
- Their ability, verse 17.
- Their temporal well-being, verse 35.

Indeed! As Israel looked around and saw the abundance and prosperity which accompanied secular living under an earthly king, their lust was conceived!

## **Psalm 73**

We see this again in Psalm 73. Asaph writes with honesty describing his feelings. Who in the body of Christ hasn't had these struggles?

Psalm 73:2-14, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

What is it that typically leads the child of God down the path of rebellion?

One's longing for the good-life, the exciting-life as pictured and seen by the world.

When the elders of our text saw this "green grass," they were sold. No amount of warning from God would detour them.

## **The Apostle John**

Consider John. John exhorts us this way.

1 John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

What specifically are we not to love?

1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

John describes three categories of sin which he knows will be a pull for the child of God. These three areas affect all men.

1. Fleshly desires- including man/woman relationship, pleasure, excitement, entertainment, and the like.
2. What our eyes might covet- including property, prosperity, positions, and the like.
3. Positions of power and influence.

When one looks at these three areas we find that there is enough sin and temptation to side-track the most devout child of God.

We could go on and on here discussing the allure that accompanies worldly living.

When the people of God beheld the nations around them and the life, prosperity, security, and success that seem to accompany earthly monarchies, no warning from the mouth of the Lord was loud enough to detour them from their lust. Notice again the text.

1 Samuel 8:20, "That we ["we" is in the emphatic position here; thus we see that the focus here was their perceived benefit] also may be like all the nations; and **that our king** may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

With a reference to a king "going before them" and "fighting their battles," the felt-needs of life clearly are in view. The issues of personal significance and earthly security that we just saw in the verses above are their desire.

Truly, Israel acted as they did, ignoring the warnings of the Lord, because they were longing for the type of life (really the hype of life) afforded by the nations. From this we see the second element that leads to Rebellion in the life of the child of God: The lust for the security, significance, pleasure, and peace which is promised by the world! When God's people longed for this more than Christ, they committed horrible sin.

And yet amazingly today, the church can be found resembling the elders of our passage. WE can be found resembling the elders of our passage.

How is it that this text has had so little impact in your life the last couple of weeks?

Could it be that you have secret desires?

Yes you are a child of God and you know that Jesus died for your sin. But secretly, in the depths of your heart, you have a desire for more. MORE...

- Fun.
- Pleasure.
- Acceptance.
- Satisfaction.
- Excitement.
- Security.
- Respect.
- Meaning.
- Support.
- Significance.

Yet see this is the thing! While, many a church has heard your cry and so fashioned their ministry to please you, the consumer, you have found Christian friends who have endorsed your dissatisfaction. You have been a part of one of the many movements sweeping through the church in search of "authentic" Christianity.

God's not playing your game! Though He loves us and is working toward our sanctification He has not nor will He ever be in competition with Baal!

Oh child of God: He who ignores the past is bound to repeat it! The history of the church will demonstrate a constant moving toward the world on the part of the believer- a move toward

- Relativism.
- Excitement in worship.
- Spontaneity.
- Fulfillment. And the like.

While these “movements” have been corrected by reformations throughout time, nevertheless history demonstrates that the bent of our heart is toward apostasy. We long for the life afforded by the nations. And we vote for the rejection of God in favor of the temporal thrill. John Owen put it this way:

“Temptations do not put anything into a man which is not there already.”<sup>4</sup>

And yet there is nothing new under the sun. Which is why the warning is so-oft repeated in Scripture.

Proverbs 4:23, “**Keep thy heart with all diligence;** for out of it are the issues of life.”

1 Timothy 4:16, “**Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine;** continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Acts 20:28, “**Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock,** over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

Romans 12:2, “**And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,** that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

1 Timothy 4:7, “But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and **exercise thyself rather unto godliness.**”

Family of God we must indeed heed this warning that we might always be

- Sensitive to the Lord.
- Zealous to do His will.
- Mindful of the wickedness of our heart.
- Suspicious of our hearts.

Yet in light of our wayward will, how do we “watch over our hearts with all diligence”?

What is involved is spiritual vigilance?

The answer is found in the Scriptures. It gives us many suggestions.

## **Be Scrutinized by God’s Word**

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<sup>4</sup> John Owens, Sin and Temptation, page 9 (ISBN 1581346492)

First, we must place ourselves under the scrutiny of the law of God.

Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Paul tells us how God’s word is a light to our path.

Romans 7:7, “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”

Brothers and sisters, it is very important that we place ourselves under the word of God. We must allow it to teach, reprove, rebuke, correct and train us in righteousness. Yes at times it will be condemning- as our secret faults are “opened and laid bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:12-13). But don't miss it! When the Bible exposes our sin, the purpose is to drive us to the cross of Christ!

## **Preach the Gospel**

We also must preach the Gospel to ourselves daily!

Romans 1:15, “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also”

The significance of this verse is seen when we consider that the Romans to whom Paul longed to preach were Christians.<sup>5</sup> Paul longed to preach the gospel to Christians! Because as we sit beneath the scrutiny of God's word, again we always will be condemned! Accordingly we continually need to be reminded that the basis of God's love for us today is NOT the labors of my hands BUT God's own good pleasure by which He died on the cross to make us God's own!

## **A Life of Prayer**

We must cultivate a life of prayer! Christ told His disciples this before He was betrayed.

Matthew 26:41, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

We've recently discussed this theme such that you know that the essence of a life of prayer is a life of devotion/dependence upon God. And so as the gospel is proclaimed to your soul daily

- Entrust yourself to God.
- Commit your way to the Lord.
- Ask Him to deliver you from evil.

And as you and I take His way of escape, He will do it!

## **Watch Our Heart**

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<sup>5</sup> Compare Romans 1:7

We must watch over our heart. Again we read this in Proverbs.

Proverbs 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

I realize that this point is tautological. How do you watch over your heart? The fourth answer? Watch over your heart!

And yet there is insight to be gleaned from this verse. To watch over your heart is to stand as a guard over what you allow your heart to meditate upon. The Scripture says:

Proverbs 27:19, “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.”

Proverbs 28:7, “**For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:** Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.”

Truly, we must be very careful what we allow our minds to think upon!

## **No Strongholds of Rebellion**

We must not allow a stronghold for rebellion to exist in our lives.

Romans 13:14, “**But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.**”

This is such an important command- for how silly is it if we diligently guard what is in our heart but then to make provision for our fleshly lusts. We must not feed our fleshly desires!

If you want to remain pure you must guard what you allow

- Your eyes to see.
- Your heart to imagine.
- Your mind to conceive.

More kingdoms of the world have toppled not as a result of war, but moral decay from within!

## **Put On Christ**

One must put on Christ.

Romans 13:14, “**But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.**”

This implies emulating His actions, thoughts, mind, and desires. And yet there is a caveat here. If we endeavor to emulate Christ without first trusting Him and relying upon Him daily for our salvation by praying for His grace then we will hold to a form of godliness, but deny its power!

So diligently strive to put on Christ, but let us do so as ones trusting in Him first.



## God's Way of Escape

Take God's way of escape.

1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

God is ever and always working in the lives of His children such that when they are tempted to sin, He provides escape routes. It may be the word of God which is brought to mind. It may be the strong objection of our conscience. It may be a bitter providence. It may be a disruption. We must learn to be sensitive to these things!

And yet whatever it may be, we do know that each path of escape is fortified and swept clean by His Ordinary means of Grace:

- The word.
- Sacraments.
- Prayer.

Accordingly, that we might be prepared and ready for battle, give diligent attention to His means of grace that we might be able to stand in the day of trial!

- Be in the word.
- Learn to delight in His worship.
- Stay on your knees.
- Sup long at His holy table.

And do this with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart.

Brothers and sisters, there is more that we could do in our battle for holiness and undistracted devotion, yet may the warnings of this text sober us such that we flee from sin unto God!

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Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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### **About the Preacher**

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