

SEPARATION FROM SIN:
The Neglected Doctrine
Message 4
Text: 1 Samuel 15:1-9

INTRO: Our subject is 'Separation From Sin'. I thought I should pass on what was sent to me this week by A. W. Tozer. He says, "I want to bring you my postulate that most present-day Christians live sub-Christian lives. As a result, **Christianity has been watered down until the solution is so weak that if it were poison it would not hurt anyone and if it were medicine it would not cure anyone!** Most Christians are not joyful persons because they are not holy persons, and they are not holy persons because they are not filled with the Holy Spirit, and they are not filled with the Holy Spirit because they are not separated persons. The Spirit cannot fill whom He cannot separate, and whom He cannot fill, He cannot make holy, and whom He cannot make holy, He cannot make happy!

"My postulate further insists that the average modern Christian is not Christlike. The proof of this is apparent in the disposition that we find among the children of God. They have moral weaknesses and suffer frequent defeats. They have a dulled understanding and often live far below the standard of the Scriptures and thus outside the will of God. To be honest, let us admit that the application of the gospel is being pulled down to the standard of the most carnal, the cheapest saintling hanging on by the teeth anywhere in the kingdom of God!"

Well, our subject is separation. We have been looking at broad categories of sin. Over the years I have taught through a very foundational course called, 'Man, Sin and Salvation.' Now you can see that they are related terms. And in the section of sin I have taught briefly through the area of sin. And every time I have come there, I have failed to be able to categorize sin in such a manner that my mind is at rest. And now I am going over that subject in preaching and I'm at the same point. I did read an interesting article that said that all sins could be listed under the ten commandments. That might be a thought worth pursuing.

Let me give you an example to give a bit of an idea of size of this subject. The word wicked, which we will be looking at, in the OT is 'ra'. It occurs 663 times. But then there is 'rasha' which occurs 263 times. Then there is 'resha' which occurs 30

times. And then there are other words translated by the word wicked, but they are different words than these.

And now, to categorize sins, one must come to some core thought of what numerous sins have in common. Let me give you an example. You see, the word vegetable is a broad term covering various kinds of things that grow in or just above the ground. There are carrots and peas and potatoes and beans and others. Now one must distinguish those from what we have classed as fruit. And fruit also has a number of items that come under that category of vegetation. And now one must find the outstanding common denominator that makes something a vegetable rather than a fruit. And then you run into the tomato.

Not only is the study of sin a mentally taxing subject, it is emotionally and spiritually taxing. Like the subject of demonism, if Satan can keep the blinders on us, he does not even mind us going to church. I am convinced that there are a lot of churches, a lot of pastors, a lot of missions and a lot of missionaries Satan is not unhappy with. But when the blinders over people's eyes are threatened, he comes to vicious life. So this subject needs much prayer. If we call all those who profess to be believers today the Church, then the Church today is very weak, and a large part is due to the Christian's ignorance of Satan, his ignorance of demons, and his failure to recognize sin and the magnitude of sin in the eyes of God.

d. Wickedness

Well, we have looked at transgression, iniquity, error or sins of ignorance. the next major category of sin we want to consider is called wickedness. Turn to Genesis 6. The first occurrence of this word wicked is in Genesis 6:5 (read). It says, "Then the LORD saw that the **wickedness** (7451) of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only **evil** (7451) continually." In this passage, the word translated 'wickedness' and 'evil' are the same word. In the Hebrew the word is 'ra'. This word alone is used 663 times in the OT and it has related words. So it is a very big subject.

The Theological Wordbook of the OT says of this word that it, "...mostly denotes unethical or

immoral activity against other people..." It further says, "The person whose way of life is characterized by ra' has a bleak future, if he continues in it..." And again, "Left to himself, an evil person has no chance of survival. But the God who is his judge is also the one who calls him to change his ways; it must be a radical action on man's part..." This radical action on man's part is given in Psalm 37:27 as to, "Depart from evil, and do good; And dwell forevermore." That is a turning from sin or repentance.

So let us go to Genesis 6 again (read 1-5). We note that the major sin for which the flood was sent to destroy most of mankind is physical immorality. This is also a major area described by the word ra'. Sins related to this area of man's existence is one of the major areas of sin for all of mankind everywhere.

How could God be justified in having Israel go into the land of Canaan and drive out all the people and kill men, women and children? It is this sin that required him to flood the world of mankind and to deal with the wickedness of the Canaanites.

Now in Genesis 6:5, we see where wickedness originates in man. It is in the heart. That is what we call the mind. And look at verse 5 (read). Notice it is the thoughts and intents that are corrupted in the heart. The word 'intent' has the idea of forming, like forming pottery from clay. In the mind thoughts are formed that become actions. The word 'thought' speaks of a device a plan. In the heart sins are thought out and formed to come to fruition later in practice.

Turn to Matthew 15. The Scribes and Pharisees were upset that Jesus' disciples ate with unwashed hands. They were religiously scrupulous about man's outward appearance and actions. But the heart was not so much their concern. And Jesus clarified their problem. He said if you eat unclean things, the body knows how to separate it

from the good and eliminate that bad and keep the good.

But the heart, and Jeremiah has described it as desperately wicked above all things, when one does not watch what happens there, it defiles the man. Why? Because it is not so capable of eliminating the bad as the body is. Feed the mind with wrong things, and you know the saying: Garbage in, garbage out, that is garbage in actions. Well, Jesus instructed those religious people on the matter and the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Do you know that these very religious guys were offended at you about what you said?"

So look at verses 12-14 (read). You see truth is offensive to religiosity and Jesus is not concerned that they are offended at Him. If they will ever be saved, such truths they will have to learn to welcome. Jesus' teaching had a way of rooting out those who were not true believers. Now look at what happened in 15-20 (read).

The NT has two words that are translated 'wicked'. They are *kakos* and *poneeros*. I think it is the word *poneeros* that corresponds to the OT word 'ra'. Bishop Trench's book on synonyms of the NT says of these two words, "The *kakos* may be content to perish in his own corruption, but the *poneeros* is not content unless he is corrupting others as well, and drawing them into the same destruction with himself." Now there is a key ingredient that distinguishes the sins in this broad category from others. Wickedness is a malignant cancer that infects others.

Trench then quotes Proverbs 4:16 and I'll add verse 17 and this says, "For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence."

In a message on Ephesians 6:10-20 we considered the words that we are to put on the whole armor of God that we might be able to withstand in the evil day. It is the wicked day. Here is a quote from

that message: "Now let us notice what kind of an evil day, this evil day is. In our last message I mentioned that there are two Greek words for wickedness, *kakos* and *poneiros*. A *kakos* person is happy to live in sin by himself. A *poneiros* person wants to drag others into sin as well. This evil day is the *poneiros* day. It is a day that is specifically designed by the devil to pull you down to his own depravity and doom." How many a Christian has fallen in the evil day.

There are all kinds of sins of immorality and these fall into the camp of wickedness. Today we have the great sin of Sodomy entering our land as a troop. As I see it, we, the Church of America, gave the OK to Satan for the sin of Sodomy when we did not stand up against divorce and remarriage.

It was these kinds of sins that were the cause of the flood and the destruction of a whole world full of people. It was these sins why God told Israel to go to Canaan and drive them out or kill men, women and children. It was these kinds of sins for which Sodom and Gomorah were destroyed.

When the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and some angels went down to Sodom to see its wickedness, the wicked in those cities went to take them for immoral purposes. And do you know what Lot said? He said, "I pray you, brethren, do not do so wickedly." I remind us once more that we are fast-forwarding to destruction because we have reached this level of wickedness in our land.

e. Disobedience

We go to yet another broad category of sin. It is the word *disobedience*. Let me start with the NT word for disobedience. There are two main words. Go to 2 Corinthians 10 (read 3-6). This is a very involved passage where Paul deals with those in Corinth who taught that he was not an apostle. Those teachers were disobedient and causing doubts in the minds of the Corinthians. But Paul says his weapons were not carnal, not fleshly. But they were mighty in God, that is, they are spiritual, and they are able to cast down arguments and all that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Now, the word 'obedience' here is *hupokoe*. The word to obey, as in verse 6 is *hupokow*. It means to hear under. The hearer is subject in some way to the speaker. It means to obey, to do what is requested or required. *Hupokoe* is obedience. It is the result of hearing under. It now does what is instructed. Now the word disobedience in this verse is the failure to hear under. It is not being in submission to what has been instructed.

Now let us go to the OT. We go to Exodus 15. In chapter 14, Israel had come through the Red Sea and God had drowned the Egyptian army in the sea. And in chapter 15:1-17, Israel sang their victory song. It had been a long hard trial to get out of Egypt and reach safety, but they were there now.

All that is a picture of the believers salvation by faith. And now they will pass through the wilderness to go to the promised land. And we have our first event at this point (read 22-27). Well, there are huge lessons here. Now, they were newly saved, and newly tried, and had newly failed. I want to propose to you that after having sung this great victory song, and a day of traveling and no water to be had, brought about complaining. After two days it got worse. After three days it was bad.

And there, lo and behold, after the third day, was water! And they filled their cups, and it was bitter water! The word 'bitter' in Hebrew is 'marah'. And I further propose that the Lord brought them to this place to show them what they were like. In their complaining, they had been disobedient to the Lord. And here is the Hebrew word for disobedience, 'marah'.

The word to disobey, *marah*, in the OT is generally used to refer to man's disobedience to God. But it speaks as well of children's disobedience to parents. But consider now the second NT word for disobedience. Go to Ephesians 2 (read 1-2). The word translated disobedience here means unbelief. I propose that unbelief precedes disobedience, so that if you have unbelief, there will be

disobedience. Israel murmured so many times in their wilderness wanderings because of their failure to believe or obey or to hear under.

f. Unbelief

That brings us to the next major category of sin which is unbelief. Some have said that the only sin that will keep you out of heaven is unbelief. That is true in a sense, but the reason we go to hell is sin. All sin will keep us out of heaven. True faith will save us from where we are headed already. It will cause us to repent and trust God.

Turn to 1 Samuel 15. Israel failed again and again, and it was because of unbelief. You see, many sins affect a wide range of sinfulness. Take Saul of the OT. Israel had asked for a king prematurely, and it had drastic results for Israel.

Look now at verses 1-3 (read). Saul is given very clear commandments. First, attack Amalek, and second, do not spare them. Then God went even further and told him what it meant not to spare them. All men, women and children were to be killed; and all animals were to be destroyed. You see, the sins of Amalek had come to the full. Salvation is now beyond possible. Is that possible? Yes, it was here.

Now look at verses 4-9 (read). Oh, there are so many sins involved here. Verse 9 says they spared Agag, the king; and all that were good of the animals. Now notice that they were not 'willing' to destroy all as they had been instructed. No doubt, iniquity was in their hearts. They reasoned why that would not be a good idea.

But I think a huge sin in Saul here was unbelief. So look at 10-11 (read). Saul's sins were finally catching up with him. So look at 12-13 (read). Now how could Saul greet Samuel like this? Iniquity, no doubt. So look at 14-15 (read). Whom did Saul blame? The people! But who was king and who had been instructed? Saul! So look at 16-19 (read).

Now notice that Samuel says, "Why did you not obey the voice of the LORD." The word 'obey' is shamah, and means to hear, as we saw in the NT earlier. To not obey, not hear, is disobedience. But notice he says further, that to take the spoil was 'evil'. There we have the word 'ra' that we have seen earlier as well.

Now look at verse 20 (read). Saul said, "But I did hear!" No, he did not hear. He heard the sound vibrations but they did not reach his heart. And why did they fail to reach his heart? I propose to you that it was unbelief. It was the Lord who instructed him. If he had believed, he would have done what he was instructed to do. Unbelief brings about disobedience which in this case brought about wickedness.

But, let us now add yet another sin to this. Look at verse 20 (read). Now what do we have? Iniquity! He twisted truth to suit his own wants! But look now at verses 22-23 (read). You see, disobedience is rebellion. And rebellion is as bad as witchcraft. And involved was stubbornness. And stubbornness is what? Iniquity and Idolatry! Self worship! And what is the last word? All of this is from rejecting God! If one truly believes, one does not reject the instructions of the Lord. This rejection is nothing but unbelief!

Now look at verses 24-31 (read). Oh Lord God, you are so very, very merciful! But look at verses 32-33 (read). Oh Lord God, give us hearts to obey You! May I ask you, do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? No, I did not ask if you are full. I asked if you are hungry for it? If so, you are a blessed man.

g. Lawlessness

Another broad term for sin is lawlessness. It only occurs in the NT and here it is found 10 times. Go to 1 John (read 3:4). Lawlessness, we are told here is sin. The word for lawlessness is anomia, without law. And without law does not mean they didn't laws, it means acting without law. The

verse says whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, he is doing that which is outside of what is allowed.

Here is the conclusion; wherever there is lawlessness, there sin will flourish. We saw in Timothy that the law was put in place because people were unrighteous. And what is unrighteous is determined by God, not man. Man sometimes does what is right in his own eyes, but it is what is right in the eyes of God that is truly right.

Lawlessness, as used in the NT refers to lawlessness with regard to God. But in Romans 13 we are instructed to obey the laws of man as well. To live outside of the laws of one's country, unless those laws conflict with the will of God, is lawlessness as well.

h. Ungodliness, lacking any worthy fear of God.

Another broad category of sin is ungodliness. There seems to be a different thought between the OT words translated ungodly and the NT words. I will take the NT word here. We turn to 1 Timothy 1 (read 8-11). Here is an interesting list of sins. The first several come in pairs and the words in each pair seem to be related.

In the last months I have found it amazing to my mind, that no sooner did Christianity take root somewhere, and there were false teachers in the church. So look at verse 3-4 (read). Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to guard the doctrine. Now it appears the trouble at Ephesus Paul is dealing with here is Jewish people who were adding Judaism to Christianity and they were missing the point of the very law they were trying to teach, so look at verses 5-7 (read).

Paul then goes on to show that the law is not made for the righteous and then he shows for whom it was given. And in verses 8-11 we have some interesting pairs of sins. And the first several pairs are broad categories, and the sins of each pair, it seems are related.

So there is first, the lawless and the insubordinate. Insubordination and lawlessness go together. We will look at the second pair in a moment, but let us look first at the third pair. They are the unholy and the profane. Again, these two seem to be related. Vine's Dictionary says, "The natural antagonism between the profane and the holy or divine grew into a moral antagonism."

For example, marriage is a holy institution; it matters not whether the couple is Christian or not. And it is a blessed and holy union if it is experienced in the way God intended, even if it is experienced by unbelievers. But to experience the union without marriage is unholy. To experience the holy in sin is profanity. For example, to talk of God is good for an unbeliever. To use the name of God in vain is profanity.

But look now at the second pair. Here we have the ungodly and the sinners. What is the relationship here? Well, sin is missing the mark of God's perfect will and character; whether by thought, word or action. That is a very broad range of things, but what is the connection to ungodliness?

The NT word is *asebas*. It is a word negated by the negative *a*. The word to which the *a* is attached is *sebase*, which is from *sebeomai* which means reverence or awe. The sin of ungodliness is that there is no sense of reverence for God. I think it is best described by a lack of a fear for God. To have a lack of fear for God is a huge sin! It is ungodliness. It is the forerunner of all sinning! It is one of the greatest problems in our country and in our churches.

I was given a link to an article last week. It spoke of a man, who somewhere in life became a Christian or professed to at least. He started a Rock band called, "As I Lay Dying." Let me say something to our young people. You don't need somebody to write a list of Rock bands you should or should not listen to. If you need that, you have trouble with ungodliness. All you have to do here is listen to the name. If that is not enough,

all you have to do is look at this singer. If you need more, you are very ungodly.

Well, this "Christian Rock Singer" studied religion in a long distance program and became an unbeliever. So he says. Then he cheated on his wife, and I'm not really sure which came first. Listen to his words, "I felt less guilty if I decided, 'Well, marriage isn't a real thing, because Christianity isn't real. God isn't real. Therefore marriage is a stupid piece of paper with the government.'" There is iniquity, a twisting of truth to suit one's own purposes.

But what did he do? He kept singing his so called Christian songs. Listen now to the article on this man: "A so called Christian heavy metal band whose frontman was convicted of attempting to hire a hitman to murder his estranged wife has admitted that it duped fans into believing that they were true Christian in order to sell their music." You talk about a list of sins in such a band.

Listen further to his own ungodly testimony. He said, "I remember one Christian festival where an interviewer wanted one of the guys [in the band] to share his testimony, and he just froze up and let one of the guys who was still a Christian at the time answer the question..." Then he says, "We laughed about it afterward, but we were only laughing because it was so awkward." He also said, "When kids would want to pray with us after shows, I'd be like, 'Um go ahead and pray!' I would just let them pray and then say 'Amen.' If praying while I have my hand on their shoulder makes them feel better, I didn't want to take that away from them." He added, "When they would specifically ask me to pray for something, I'd say, 'I don't really like to pray out loud, but I'll take that with me to the bus.'"

There we have profanity, ungodliness. And we might focus on the ungodliness of that Rock band, but I propose to you the real problem may be the ungodliness of those who support them. The sins of that Rock band, in my estimation were guilty of

all the major sins of the first three pairs in our verse. But attending is at least the sin of ungodliness. Buying their music is ungodliness as well.

Ungodliness and a lack of the fear of God displays a total lack of wisdom. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever." You see, if one can't tell that a group like this or not even nearly like this is not Christian, one is living a life devoid of the fear of God.

Psalm 19:9, "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate."

Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Proverbs 14:26, "In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge."

Proverbs 14:27, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death."

Proverbs 15:33, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility."

Isaiah 33:6, "Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure."

CONCL: We conclude. We have looked at wickedness. Maybe an oversimplification would be to say that it involves physical immorality, and the wicked person wants to drag others into his

vices. God destroyed the world with a flood for this sin. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorah for these sins. He had men, women and children killed because this sin brings such depravity that, I believe, there is no chance for children in such a culture to get saved.

Then we looked at disobedience. When we are instructed to do something by someone who is over us in authority, and we do not obey that, we are disobedient. And that led us to unbelief. Unbelief, it seems to me, precedes disobedience. Parents, start disciplining your children when they are very young. They can be taught obedience at a very young age. Many little children, without knowing it, are smarter than their parents.

Then we considered lawlessness and ungodliness. I define ungodliness in brief as being without fear for God. To not fear God is a sin and will lead to more sin. There is a huge lack of the fear of God among Christians. We mentioned one area in specific; music, and there are many other areas affected by this sin.

May there grow in us a hunger and a thirst for righteousness.