

The Root of Sin

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Preached On: Tuesday, August 6, 2013

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Let me precede this message with a warning for it is greatly important how you listen to this message for Satan does not want you to hear this. I now begin.

A minister's job is twofold when it comes to preaching or preaching should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. This message should bring comfort in the sense that it will help you better understand why you sin and hopefully help you to mortify the sins of the flesh. My message today is entitled The Root of Sin for when John the Baptist came preaching, he preached nice little messages that didn't disturb anybody. Oh, I'm sorry, I got him confused with preachers of our day. No, John the Baptist preached such disturbing messages that it cost him his head.

Listen to his remarks taken from the Gospel of Luke in chapter 3, verses 7-9,

“Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

Now, that is felt need preaching, isn't it? He calls them vipers and warns them to flee from the wrath to come. Then he says,

“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Now listen friends, we are going to address this aspect of taking an axe to the root of the tree and I'm going to dig up and uncover the root of sin in our lives. How can you be a Christian and sin? How can you in the morning have a quiet time with the Lord and in the afternoon on the same day fall into sin? Why is your life at times like an elevator where one day you are on the top floor in the penthouse suite of victory and the next day you are down in the basement of despair. Why does the same sin seem to plague you? Are you not saved? Are you saved? What is going on in your life when sin breaks out violently and takes you by force? We know that as believers Jesus came to save us from our sins and we also know that in the work of redemption, Christ paid our sin debt on Calvary and

set us free from not only the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. If that is true, which it certainly is, then why do we still sin?

Hopefully, this examination today will be of some help to you. You will need to take out a piece of paper and a pen or you can write this in the margin of your Bibles, which is ever more convenient for you. We are going to write out an acrostic using the word “sin” for we are going to break down sin today and get to the root of it so we can root it out, root it out of our lives. Are you ready with your pen and paper?

Now, write the word “sin” vertically in the form of an acrostic leaving ample room alongside each letter and leave space between each letter for notes. So, on a piece of paper you should have a capital S with a blank space, then beneath that a capital I with a blank space beside it, then beneath that a capital N with a blank space beside that. Are you with me?

We’re going to get to the root of why we sin for a true Christian is no longer under the dominion of sin. He’s been placed in a different Kingdom with a different Ruler, King Jesus. Yet the influence of sin still is at war with our spirit and it’ll be that way until we go to glory and enter our state of glorification whereby we are finally free from the presence of sin. But until then, we are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit and our urge to mortify our sinful deeds of the body to put them to death via the cross which speaks of this in the life of the believer. Galatians 2:20 declares,

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Let me ask you: how many messages have you heard this year on the cross in the life of the believer? Probably not very many because if you speak on that theme you will have to address the ugly topic of sin head on and few wish to do it.

Well, let’s look at your acrostic which you wrote down on your piece of paper. Beside the letter S write the word “satisfaction.” Now, listen closely: if you look hard enough and are willing to examine yourself under the searching spotlight of the Holy Spirit you will often find that the sin you struggle with has a much deeper root than appears on the surface. If we fail to properly examine ourselves after we sin with the express purpose to avoid that sin in the future, then we will merely confess that sin over and over again without ever truly turning from it with true repentance, with a proper understanding of why we did it.

You see, friends, the reason I had you write that word “satisfaction” alongside the letter S is because when we sin we are telling Jesus that we are not satisfied in him. We sin because we do not have satisfaction in him for all things in our life. Rather, we sin because somehow we have become dissatisfied with him. Perhaps our dissatisfaction with God lies in the fact that the promise that God previously gave us through his written Word is not being answered. It’s not coming true as you planned. God is not fulfilling

that promise right now in your life and you are both impatient and unbelieving. You are not waiting God's time for him to answer that prayer or promise and your faith is failing in this regard. You do not doubt his ability to answer that prayer but you are doubting his desire to answer it even though he's already spoken to you through his holy Word.

The breakdown is not with God but with you, so you rebel and sin and your actions tell God you are not finding total satisfaction in him for you are looking to another to satisfy you and to gratify you right now. Perhaps you have a wayward child and you feel God is not answering your prayers for that child to be saved. Perhaps it is a health issue and you find no relief. Perhaps it is a financial crisis that is pressing you into despair and seemingly there is no way out but down. Perhaps you are a pastor who is troubled by a deacon or member of your congregation and every time you see that person you seethe with anger. Perhaps your present sin problem is directly related to your unforgiving heart. You have a root of bitterness toward another and you literally cannot stand the sight of them any longer.

You see, friend, when we sin we are telling God that our satisfaction is no longer in him, that we are not satisfied in him or with him. Eve ate the fruit of the tree and gave it to her husband, Adam, to eat and they both fell in monumental sin because they said in their minds and heart that God wasn't enough, that even though they were in paradise and in his very presence, still he wasn't enough. They wanted more, they just weren't satisfied with him.

You see, friends, often when we sin, we just confess that particular sin that we are struggling with and it keeps coming back to haunt us time and time again. Oh, it may be several months before it raises its ugly head and manifests itself in our conduct and lives and we weep and cry and say, "Oh God, how did I do that again? Why did I lose my temper like that? Why did I fall into that grievous sin again?" And we confess the sin but fail to go deeper and search for the root of why we are sinning. The sin itself is just an outward thing or a response on our part to a temptation. We must go deeper to locate the real reason why we sin. Then, do as John the Baptist urges and take an axe to the root of the tree so we will be better equipped spiritually next time to see the danger ahead of time and ask the Holy Spirit's aid in mortifying that sin in our lives.

Listen, friends, Satan loves to see you sin. It makes you appear that you are still his captive. It allows him to have further access to you. Sin allows Satan to accuse you before God for he is the accuser of the brethren. Satan wants you to sin because it sidelines you from Christian service like an athlete who is benched and kept from playing the game. Satan wants to ruin your testimony for God and ruin your witness for Christ. He wants to rip you and tear you and devour you with sin. That is his weapon of choice. But as we put on the armor of God as found in Ephesians 6 we learn about Satan's devices as we fight the battles against him in our earthly bodies while we live here on earth.

But we must get to the root of our sin and dig it up and burn it, so to speak, as rotten wood is dug up and burned. So, remember this: when we sin, we are telling God that we

are not satisfied in him. We are not satisfied with our current situation or circumstances and when we do that, we can easily fall into sin. We are telling Jesus that he is not our entire satisfaction.

This is the first word of our little acrostic on sin: our satisfaction must be in Christ Jesus and not our present circumstance. Now, alongside the next letter, the letter I, write the words "I will." In the Book of Isaiah where it pictures Satan in rebellion to God, it is found in the passage of chapter 14 beginning in verse 12. I want us to listen to these five instances of Satan rebelling against God with his defiance of "I will." Listen,

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

And I say to that, friends, a big Amen. But notice here we have the five "I wills" of Satan. He will ascend above God for he is not subject to God any longer. He says, "I will do as I will." And when we sin, we are doing the same. We are saying to God, "God, get out of the way. I will have it my way." For also in the Book of Isaiah we read,

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

You see, friends, sin is going our way when we know it isn't God's way. It is putting our will above his will for us. We are, in essence, shouting at the top of our voice to God, "I will have it my way!" That, friends, is outright rebellion. Your problem isn't your rotten sin, it's your stinking will. So we sin when we are not satisfied in Jesus, when we exert ourselves above God and we turn our own way over his way for us. That is sin.

The last letter of our acrostic is found next the letter N. Beside the letter N, write the word "neglect." Sin is a neglect of another thing. Sin is a neglect of a duty. Sin is a neglect of time with God and humility in prayer. Sin is neglect of witnessing to the lost. Sin is a neglect of reading the Word of God because we like our football games and basketball games and entertainments over the things of God. Neglect of God is sin and it eventually will break out in some gross sin either through your disposition, your temper or your lust. When we neglect our time with God a vacuum is created and that vacuum will be filled with something other than God and it will more than likely turn to sin.

Listen, friends, one of the greatest dangers of a Christian is to not be thankful to God or neglect to be thankful to God for mercies received and graces given. It is a grievous sin to God and this sin uncovered and unearthed will eventually break out in sins of passion and gross sins. Neglect may be your biggest fault right now. Neglect of God and neglect of his will in your life. Neglect of obedience to what he has revealed to you and said to you.

Listen, I was having lunch with a businessman whose career was up and down, usually more down than up, and I asked him what he did before he got into that line of business. Suddenly he looked sad and confessed to me that God had previously called him into the ministry as a young man but he did not want to be poor so he chose a profession where he could make money. His neglect of what God wanted for him was disaster in his life. He eventually was fired even from this job.

I was discipling a man who was having marital problems. His life at that time was utter chaos. He was successful in business but his marriage was a failure. It was falling apart. I probed him and asked him what he originally did before he got into that career. His face fell when he told me he had been a pastor but he quit the ministry because he needed more money. He wanted money over being a pastor. Neglect of what God had for him in life had put him on a road of family ruin.

Neglect, friends, is sin. Let me ask you a question: has God called you to the mission field and you didn't go? Has God called you repeatedly into full-time ministry and you still haven't surrendered? Has God told you to do something and you have neglected to do it and you wonder why you fall so readily into sin?

I repeat, the root of sin must be unearthed. It must be dug up, examined under the light of the Holy Spirit and the Son of Righteousness. You will stand amazed at the difference in your life if you will only heed this warning for if we look deep enough into our behavior, especially our sinful behavior, we will often find one or more of these three things in our little acrostic today.

S is for satisfaction.
I is for "I will."
N is for neglect.

For you see, dear friend, sin is all three of these. When we are dissatisfied with our life and circumstance that God has sovereignly placed us in, then we are dissatisfied with our unanswered prayers or not realized promises from God, then we tell God, "I will find satisfaction in another." So we sin.

When we exalt ourselves and say, "I will do this thing over God's will. I will even do this though I know it is not God's will for me to do this. I'm going to do it anyway." That's grievous sin.

When we neglect to visit a widow or give to missions or neglect our duties that God has called us to do, we sin. And worst of all, when we neglect God himself by replacing him with the things of this world, then we fill up our lives with superficial things that give no real lasting satisfaction because only Jesus satisfies. Only Jesus satisfies.

Get to the root, friend, of your sin problem and you will make great progress in your sanctification. Listen to God's voice from the Book of Isaiah which declares,

“For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.”

That, friends, is the kind of God we serve. All glory to his holy name.