

Sin Easily Entangles Us

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[0 : 00] We're going to pick up our study again tonight, speaking about the pursuit of holiness in an unholy world.

! No one is more ill-equipped to speak on this topic than I am. I mean, we're talking about holiness. We do find ourselves engaged in a section on this study referred to as the law of indwelling sin. And while I'm not the one I would choose to speak about holiness, I am the one that I would choose to speak about indwelling sin. I seem to be an authority on that.

Sin is spoken of in Scripture as indwelling. It is an indwelling law within the human family. Since that is true, it works easily in the life of humans, both saved and unsaved. But the book of Hebrews, chapter 12 and verse 1, refers to it as the sin which so easily entangles us.

[1 : 25] I wrote down a quote from one of the old Puritans back many centuries ago, which I think speaks well to our topic. Indwelling sin has a great facility in applying itself to its work.

It needs no doors to be opened to it, no tools to perform its task. Whatever duty the soul sets itself to, this law dwells in the faculties required.

It is in the mind of ignorance, darkness, vanity, folly, madness, in the will and spiritual deadness, stubbornness, and the roots of obstinacy, in the heart, in inclinations to the world, present things, and sensuality.

So it is easy for it to insinuate itself into all that we do, to hinder all that is good, and to further all sin and wickedness.

It has an intimacy with the soul, and therefore, in all we do, it easily attacks us. It is present in those faculties of the soul, which we must use to do whatever we do, and so it has an advantage of acting with great ease.

[3 : 02] That really sounds like something that could easily be written about our culture and the church in the 21st century. It was actually written in the mid-1700s, around 1740.

The law of sin that the apostle Paul found acting within himself, and recorded that for us in Romans 6 and 7, and he also found it in the life of every believer who would ever live on this earth.

That's an amazing thing. I mean, we would put Paul as the head of the class, as far as being a Christian brother. But he agonized.

In fact, he said he was miserable over his sin. It is an interesting truth that many in the world, in every culture, are ignorant of the law of sin.

The reason they are not aware of it, primarily, is because they are dominated by it. The unsaved. People that are dwelling in darkness cannot see the darkness of their own minds.

[4 : 27] And why is that? Because they dwell in darkness. They're already in darkness. Many never see the deadness that they have toward God.

Why? Because they're dead in trespasses and sins. And such we were until the Lord came in and did a work in us.

It is simple to be at peace with our sins when we are in bondage to them. Now, when we're saved, it doesn't mean we don't sin, but it means we are convicted of that.

And if you're not convicted of your sin, go back and look at the beginning. Make sure you're in Christ. But it's simple to be at peace with our sins when we're in bondage.

And that is the status of most people in this world. They don't have the indwelling Spirit of God to convict them of sin. That's where conviction comes from.

[5 : 37] And while acknowledging that believers do sin, and can frequently, in some cases, sin, they cannot sin without ultimately the convicting presence of the Holy Spirit.

John said in 1 John, believers don't sin. Well, I can get real depressed when I read that until you figure out, because John opens up in 1 John 1 chapter that never say you don't sin.

So there seems to be a conflict there. But John, what he's saying, if we understood the original language, was don't make a practice of it. Don't make a practice of it.

Don't do it without conviction. Don't do it without confession and restoration. And the more we understand the power of indwelling sin, the less we will be captured by it and taken hostage. We need to be in pursuit of grace. That's our life. At the same time, we also have to admit there is great danger in the world for the followers of Christ.

[7 : 07] We see it all around us. There's great danger. There's great danger for our children, for our grandchildren. In my case, my great-granddaughter.

But there is danger in this world for Christ followers. We are under assault by the world and the devil and especially by the flesh.

The flesh that exists in each one of us. So where does the law of sin dwell in a man? It is entrenched or it has entrenched itself and taken up residence in the heart.

That's where the Bible says sin exists in the life of a man. It's in our heart. Now, obviously, we're not talking about the organ that pumps our blood and keeps us alive.

In Scripture, the term heart is used different ways, but primarily it speaks of the whole soul of man. The heart should be that place within a believer where God's throne exists.

[8 : 31] He's on the throne of our hearts. And that's not true of most men, is it? Because most people are not saved. Most people are not saved.

And He's not on their throne. This is what Matthew said. This is how he described what happens in the heart in Matthew 15, verse 19.

Verse 19. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, acts of adultery, other immoral sexual acts, thefts, false testimonies, and slanderous statements.

That's a pretty bad indictment of the human race. Moses even jumped in a long time before Matthew and commented on this all the way back in Genesis chapter 6.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.

[9 : 46] Genesis 6.5. That's actually leading up to the flood where only eight people were saved. And the rest of humanity, and I've heard different estimates of how many were all killed, every one of them.

And again, let me appeal to the Puritans. I like the way they write. Our Savior calls what's come out of the heart of an evil man the evil treasure of his heart.

You can read about that in Luke 6.45. This treasure will never be exhausted by spending it. Just as with grace, the more it is used and exercised, the more it is strengthened and increased.

So the more men sin, the more they are inclined to sin. If a man sins, he's inclined to sin. Sin deceives men into thinking that by a particular sin, they can so satisfy their lust that they will not need to sin anymore and that's impossible.

We think, okay, we've come to the end. I got it out of my system. Back to the Puritan, 17th century, this evil treasure is inexhaustible.

[11 : 10] It's inexhaustible. So the human heart is the dwelling place of the law of sin. The enemy of our souls tries to establish a fort or a citadel or a foothold, if you will, within the human heart and it is there that the enemy can maintain a rebellion against God.

So what do we know about the heart from Scripture? since the law of sin seems to be centered on the heart. What do we know about the heart from Scripture? Well, for one, we are told that the heart is unsearchable.

It's unsearchable. Listen to these words. The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.

Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I test the mind to give to each person according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.

And of course, that's that great passage in Jeremiah chapter 17 verses 9 and 10. And as this passage states, the heart of a man is only open to God.

[12 : 47] We cannot know another man's heart. Even more profound, we cannot know our own heart as God knows it. He knows our hearts a lot better than we do.

And he knows about the law of sin that dwells there. That gives it great strength. Why?

Because according to God, that is where, that is a place that is beyond our discovery. The heart's deceitful and wicked. In my own lifetime, many times, I thought, well, at last, sin is defeated.

I don't have to deal with it anymore. And then I discover it's not defeated. He was just out of sight for a little while. Maybe it took a nap.

I don't know. So how can we oppose such a powerful foe? the best solution is that when it appears once more on our horizon, we should immediately set ourselves in opposition to it.

[14:00] Don't invite it in and entertain it. Oppose it. When you see it on the horizon, oppose it. And the best way to do that is by appealing to the indwelling Holy Spirit because there is nothing in our heart that is not fully open to Him.

He does understand the human heart in fullness. and you can read about that, by the way, in Hebrews 4.13. So we've seen that the human heart is unsearchable from the human standpoint. It is also deceitful. The human heart is capable of tremendous deception and tremendous deceitfulness.

Dr. Owen said there are two dangers when it comes to the human heart. The heart abounds in contradictions and the heart is full of false promises.

So it likes to contradict and it likes to feed us false promises. Because the heart is full of contradictions there is no set rule or procedure when dealing with it.

[15:25] The heart is ready to contradict itself every moment. It stands ready for that. And there's no internal standard of conduct for the human heart that we can achieve.

we have to depend on the Spirit of God to do that for us. Because the human heart makes promises that are often false, all can actually seem well and then reality starts to set in.

Promises made by the human heart often disappear like a vapor. forever. They were there and then they were gone. The great theologians of the 17th century came in with three considerations when dealing with the deceitfulness of the human heart and the sin that indwells it.

And these are instructive. it lives in a place that is unsearchable. We've said that. And when we rest thinking we've won the day when it comes to indwelling sin it raises its ugly head and strikes like a diamondback rattler.

I started to use a cobra. We don't have our mills in Oklahoma. We've got diamondback rattlers now. And I've said that. There is always some sin brothers in reserve that we may not even know about.

[17:06] We might not even know about it. And you know let's all be honest with each other.

What's one of the great weaknesses I guess is a good word of men? It's lust. And you know you'd be surprised you do a word study on lust in the Bible.

It's everywhere. I was amazed. You know I'm getting real personal here. You can't see them trying to sell a hammer on TV without a girl in a bikini.

I'm watching the Dallas Cowboy game yesterday. Diane, I like the Cowboys. She loves the Cowboys. She's ecstatic. You don't know they won what 46-3 or 43-3.

It was an amazing game. And all of a sudden, I mean I'm sitting there looking at the game and now I'm looking at cheerleaders that didn't have enough clothes on to water a shotgun with.

And they understand that. They understand that. There's always a sin in reserve that we might not even know about.

[18:20] Many a military commander, if you read military history, nationally and internationally, many a commander has suffered great defeat pretty close on the heels of experiencing a great victory and then becoming complacent.

Well, we beat those guys. Well, not all of them. There's more coming. There's more coming. There's more things. King David thought he was really walking with God.

I mean, he was the king. He had it all. Huge palace. He had it all. He thought it was at the top of his game.

man. In fact, reality set in and he was walking in his own sinful strength.

And when a man tries to walk in his own sinful strength, he finds that he's not very strong. there was one command that had David been obedient to it, his affair with Bathsheba would not and could not have occurred.

[19:55] It's found in 2 Samuel chapter 11 verse 1. Here's the inspired words of God. Then it happened in the spring at the time when kings go out to battle that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel and they brought destruction on the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabah.

And listen to this. It's only five words. But David stayed in Jerusalem. Now you remember how we opened?

Then it happened in the spring at the time when kings go out to battle. But David stayed in Jerusalem.

See a problem with that? There's a problem there isn't it? Where's he supposed to be? He is supposed to be leading the army of the Lord against the enemies of God and instead he stayed back.

He disobeyed. He didn't leave Jerusalem. He didn't leave the palace. And the rest is history. And you know the story.

[21 : 26] We won't go through it all. But looks down from his rooftop onto another rooftop. And they do that in the Middle East. I've had nice dinners on rooftops.

It's cool in the desert environment in the evenings. And he sees a woman taking a bath. Should have been out with his army.

Should have been out with her husband who is braver than David was. And David had known at the time but he was going to murder him. Have him murdered. And instead he stayed back.

We can only pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation by being relentless. It is true that some men when they get older and I'm there give up a fight.

when you get to a certain age you think well it's over anyway for me you know. Guys and you young guys especially and that's everybody 70 and below in here.

[22 : 40] It's never over until Jesus calls you home. You're going to battle and war every day. It's never over.

one man has said if we die fighting in this warfare we die a conqueror. I like that. We die a conqueror. Second thing I want to point out since the heart is variable inconstant and deceitful we must be perpetually watchful.

We don't understand the depth of the human heart but we know the description right? all those things. Be watchful because you know your heart.

You know your thought processes. We are dealing in this world with an adversary that deals by deceit and treachery.

He is an authority on deceit and treachery Satan and his demons. Remember we are battling the world of flesh and the devil. You cannot be too watchful.

[24 : 05] It is impossible to be too watchful. Surprise comes when we are off guard. That is why the Bible is filled with commands such as be watchful, be circumspect, be diligent above all things.

We must live in a watchful frame of mind. now the third thing, commit everything to the one who can search with all care and diligence to him who can search the heart to the uttermost.

The triune God. He can look into the very depths of our heart. watchfulness is our duty.

Watchfulness, if we will exercise it, also maximizes our safety and that of our families.

That of our families. I think this is what David had in mind when he wrote the 139th Psalm, Psalm 139.

I'm not going to read all of it, but I'll read a chunk of it. This is David talking. Of course, this is well after Bathsheba and all that and her husband.

[25 : 45] Lord, Lord, you have searched me and known me. I tell people, God knows me. That doesn't necessarily bring me a lot of comfort, but he does know me.

David says, Lord, you've searched me and you know me. You know when I sit down and when I get up.

Kind of mundane things, aren't they? But the Lord knows those things. I mean, if he knows when a sparrow falls, he can know when we sit down and rise. you understand my thought from far away.

You scrutinize my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, Lord, you know it all.

Even that's what we're going to say before we say it. even then, you know it all. You encircled me behind and in front.

[27 : 02] You placed your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high. I cannot comprehend it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? Sounds like Jonah. If I ascend to heaven, you're there.

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, you're there. You may add a little Jonah. If I go down to the roots of the mountains, you're there.

back to David, if I take up the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there your hand will lead me and your right hand will take hold of me.

If I say, surely the darkness will overwhelm me and the light around me will be night, even darkness is not dark to you.

[28 : 19] Speaking to the Lord. Not even darkness is dark to God. And the night to God is as bright as the day.

Darkness and light are alike to the Lord. Now, David just spends all that time and what he's doing here, whether you picked up on it or not.

He's setting forth the omnipresence and omniscience of God. God's ever-present, he knows everything, and he sets that forth.

And with that in mind, listen to how David closes this psalm. He closes this great psalm by making application to this great truth.

Here's his application for what came before. Search me, God, and know my heart. You know that thing we can't know?

[29 : 23] And David says, search and know my heart. Put me to the test and know my anxious thoughts and see if there is any hurtful way in me.

And lead me in the everlasting way. Again, that is Psalm 139, 23 and 24.