

Indwelling Sin

by Anne Dutton

Anne Dutton's sermon explores the complexities of indwelling sin and emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Proverbs 13:20, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 15:57, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 1:13, Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 10:22-23, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Sanctification", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Anne Dutton's sermon emphasizes the transformative work of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, leading to regeneration, conviction, and conversion. She explains how the Spirit reveals the sinner's lost and sinful state, while also unveiling the glory and excellency of Christ as the Savior. Dutton addresses the ongoing battle against sin in the believer's life, highlighting the distinction between the renewed and unrenewed parts of the heart, and the assurance of God's sanctifying work leading to ultimate victory over sin. She encourages a steadfast faith in God's promises, a rejection of heart-idolatry, and the importance of choosing godly companions for spiritual growth.

Transcript

Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects

Dear Madam,

It is indeed a very great privilege to be favored with a religious parentage and education, but if this were our greatest felicity, we would sink, nevertheless, into eternal misery! But the vessels of mercy- of God's free, rich, sovereign mercy- in order to their time-preparation for eternal glory, are blessed by Him, with His Holy Spirit sent down into their hearts, as the spirit of regeneration, conviction, and conversion.

And this blessed spirit, in His saving work on the heart, when He first begins it, finds the sinner dead in sin, and under total darkness, as to spiritual things, in his understanding- in an entire alienation from them, and aversion to them, in his will and affections; and so, afar off from God in Christ, without any apparent right to the covenant of promise, and without any good hope through grace. And at such a time as this, He is pleased, by His almighty and all-gracious energy, to produce a new and holy principle of spiritual life in that soul which lay under the power of spiritual death entirely.

This principle, which is instantaneously given, and as to the exact moment of it to us unknown, contains in it all graces, which are afterwards drawn out into their various exercises, under the Spirit's influence, unto the regenerate soul's various privileges. And this gracious work of the Holy Spirit of the heart discovers itself to the soul that is the subject of it, and to others, so far as it is related, by a supernatural light set up in the understanding, whence the soul sees itself to be utterly lost and undone by sin, by heart and life-sin, under the curse of God's law, and in danger of the wrath which is to come- that it neither has, nor can, by self-power, attain a perfect righteousness of its own for justification.

And also, in the soul's discerning, upon the Spirit's revealing, the infinite glory and transcendent excellency of Christ as the great Savior, in His Person and offices, blood and righteousness, and in all the fullness of His grace- as God's great provision for the salvation of the chief of sinners- and as in the gospel held forth to be received of them by faith.

And further, the Spirit's saving work, on the will and affections, discovers itself by that soul's approbation of the Savior beheld, its desires after Him, its approaches to Him, its laying hold of Him, and casting itself, under the Spirit's sweet and strong attraction, with the whole weight of its everlasting salvation upon Christ alone for all holiness and all happiness, to the present and eternal praise of the God of all grace, and to the soul's present and eternal bliss; upon which, that soul becomes declaratively and apparently a child and heir of God, through Christ, as the God of grace and glory- and is more or less sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

And now, dear Madam, if you are blessed with a precious experience of this happy work on your heart, you are most certainly a new creature in Christ, and a true believer in Him, and "shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation," notwithstanding the greatest inward or outward opposition. You are forever safe in the hands of Jesus, and none of the powers of darkness, with all their subtlety and force, shall ever be able to pluck you thence. "Your refuge is the eternal God, and underneath, for your support, are the everlasting arms!" And as an inhabitant of the Rock- the Rock of Ages, who is your strong defense- you may sing and shout salvation from the top of the mountains!

But you complain, dear Madam, "that notwithstanding your approach by faith unto Christ, to touch the hem of His garment, and to lay hold of His royal robe of righteousness, the root of sin is not dried up within you- the plague of your heart is not healed- but that your heart is like a painted sepulcher, full of rottenness and putrefaction; yes, that your heart grows worse and worse." To these things I answer:

The root of sin in your heart may be considered in a twofold respect, as (1), In its principle; and (2), In its act; or, your misery may be distinguished into 'heart' and 'life-defiling' iniquity; and this, again, into the guilt and filth of both. With respect to the guilt of both, your root of sin was fully dried up and gone, upon your first act of faith on Christ's blood and righteousness, for your justification. As God, then, by the gracious declarations of His unchanging word, did not impute unto you your sin, but the perfect righteousness of His own Son, whose nature, being without a spot of sin, His heart, lip, and life-obedience, even unto death, was without blemish, so from thenceforth, you were, are, and ever shall be, in God's sight, as you appear before Him in His son- perfectly clean from the guilt of all sin, and righteous before Him as to your state of justification.

And as to the filth of your heart and life-sin, that also is dried up and gone as you appear before God for His acceptance and complacency, in His Holy Son, who has for you who stand in Christ, as perfectly holy heart, to remove out of the Father's sight all your unholiness. You are now presented before God, by

Christ, "holy and unblameable, and unreprieveable in His sight," though you still have the running outcome of sin- so much unholiness- in yourself. And in this respect, you are called to wash daily, by faith, in that fountain set open for sin, both in its guilt and filth.

"The plague of your heart," you say, Madam, "is not healed." but you ought to distinguish between your heart and your heart, or between your heart, as renewed by grace, in which dwells a principle of holiness, and from whence proceeds internal and external acts of holiness; and your heart as unrenewed, or the unrenewed part of your heart, in which dwells a whole body of sin and death, with all its members, and from whence flows internal and external acts of wickedness. For though the Holy Spirit's work on the heart is perfect, as to kind, and in respect of parts, as it extends to all the parts, powers, and faculties of the soul, so that there is no power or faculty in it but what is sanctified; yet this- His sanctifying work, is still imperfect in degree, and is to be increased by His almighty influence, unto a perfection of holiness; and having experienced the Spirit's sanctifying work on your heart as a begun-work in it, the plague of your heart, so far as it is renewed, is healed.

And if the plague of your heart were not, in this respect, healed, you would not, you could not, desire so earnestly a clean heart universally, for like loves its like. It is from holiness in your heart begun, that you long after perfection, and until that time comes, there remains in your corrupt heart all sin, which is as contrary to holiness as darkness is to light. And this is your great grief and burden and matter of your complaint, "that the plague of your heart is not healed." And indeed it is not, in the unregenerate part of it, but it is in the regenerate part of it.

When I speak of the heart, understand it as of all the powers of your soul, each of which is in part renewed and in part unrenewed; but that same almighty power which begun in you this holy work, in conformity to Christ, the Father's first-born Son, will carry it on unto absolute perfection, and then you will feel no more of heart, lip and life-abominations; but shall shout the triumphs of that mighty grace, to its endless praise, which has wrought your deliverance from all misery, and brought you up unto perfect purity, fullness of joy, and eternal glory.

But you tell me, Madam, "that your heart grows worse and worse." To this I reply: The unrenewed part of your heart, in which resides the principle of sin, has in it such a fullness of evil, such heights and depths of wickedness, such putrefaction and rottenness, that it cannot admit of greater degree. "It is deceitful above all things, and so desperately wicked" that none but the Lord Himself can find it out, or search the amazing depths of this bottomless gulf! But though sin as a principle, in the unregenerate part of your heart, cannot grow worse- the ebullitions, or boilings up of corruptions, may be more or less, as they have more or less advantage to show their rage against the God of grace and holiness, and against us as bearing His image. The workings of corruptions have less advantage when we are under present divine influence; but when this is in measure withdrawn from us, they instantly boil over with rage against the principle of grace, and by their subtlety and force, under Satan's influence- entice or hurry us away with rapidity into sinful acts, to God's dishonor and our soul's distress.

But all the rage of hell and sin within and without us, with all those hellish waters which they cast forth as a flood to swallow us up, shall never quench that spark of heavenly fire, that little grace which is wrought in our hearts by the hand of Omnipotence! No! this, by the same almighty power which enkindled it, shall be maintained and increased amid and by the greatest opposition, until it is raised into a full and eternal flame! The triumphant Captain of our salvation has vanquished all the powers of hell and sin. He has led captivity captive, and dragged all the legions of devils at His chariot wheels, when He went up to glory with

a shout- with the sound of a trumpet, amid thousands and tens of thousands of His holy angels, who saw His triumphs and sung His victories.

And as for sin, our worst enemy- the old man- the whole body of sin- it was crucified with Him, and thence, by omnipotent grace- by sin-pardoning and sin-subduing grace- it shall be shortly, totally, and finally destroyed in us! And therefore, by faith in Jehovah's almighty and covenant-engaged power, let us stand to our arms as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and wax valiant in fight against all His and our enemies; for out of weakness we shall be made strong, and brought from the field victorious through His love and blood as more than conquerors. And meanwhile, as our begun holiness increases, we shall see corruptions in their horrid ebullitions, under advancing displays of reigning grace, which gives them greater aggravations- to be worse and worse- and our new hearts shall be to all sin more and more averse- until a complete victory is won, and we are blessed with an immortal crown.

You well say, dear Madam, that "unbelief in the promises and faithfulness of God is the productive root of numerous evils," and therefore we should not indulge it, but fight against it in Jehovah's might, while we stand fast by faith in that full, glorious, and eternal liberty with which Christ, by and irreversible promise-grant, upon our first act of faith, has made us free. By standing fast by faith in that glorious liberty in which upon our first believing we were instated, I intend those after-acts of faith which respect persuasion of that saving interest in Christ and all His benefits which was then given us by promise, and so to hold fast our confidence, or persuasion of salvation, in the face of all inward or outward opposition made against it; for this is not only for God's praise, in His infinite grace and faithfulness to His promise, but will be also of great advantage for the mortification of sin in us.

As our faith in our saving interest rises, our love and gratitude to God increases; but faith of our saving interest is depressed, love and gratitude sink with it; we depart from God, the Fountain of all good, the whole of our life, as if for us in Him there were no help, and are carried away by deceitful evil- by numerous evils- as by a mighty torrent, into comfort's death. Let us beware, therefore, of an evil heart of unbelief, for faith in God, as the God of love unto us in Christ, will yield us a sweet relief, under Satan's temptations and the strong workings of inward corruptions, and edge our spirits keenly against all the Lord's and our enemies.

As to our heart-idolatry, it is a very great iniquity of which the Lord's own people are deeply guilty. But since this is the promise of His rich, free grace, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" let us plead it before His throne, and bring our every idol unto Him to be entirely slain, so shall our hearts be disjoined from them, and our admiration of, and sinful affection to, all 'glittering glow-worm glories' sink and die before the rising attracting display of His all-transcendent and infinite excellences.

And permit me, Madam, to give you a caution- Not to keep company, familiarly, with any but those whom you judge to be truly godly; for the ungodly, by their carnality, will bring you into great danger, and impair in your own spirituality. And if your intimate acquaintances are truly gracious and richly blessed with an inward experience, continue your intimacy, and labor to improve it to a mutual increase of your soul's joint-felicity, your growth in grace and furtherance in the knowledge of God in Christ.

All company has in it either the nature of fire or of air- it either heats or cools- it either excites our love of God, or upon that holy fervor casts the benumbing cold of a dreadful winter. Therefore it is a piece of spiritual wisdom, in spiritual people, to choose such alone for their intimate companions. And if your intimates, dear Madam, excel in spiritual gifts, admire not them- but admire God in them, so shall you be

conducted by the brightness of a 'beam' to the all-comprehending and all-reflecting glories of Him who is the infinite and eternal Sun.

Be assured, dear Madam, that that work of God upon the heart which brings the soul to an entire dependence on Christ- a whole Christ, is no illusion, but shall end in a full and eternal salvation. And as to the 'hope of the hypocrite', which shall perish, that is always founded upon self-worthiness; but that hope which has for its foundation God's free grace, in and through what Christ has done and suffered for us, and is made of God unto us, is good hope that shall not make ashamed, but shall be, in its glorious fruits, to the righteous, gladness unto endless ages.

As to those precious promises (Ezekiel 36:25), etc., which you so earnestly desire to experience, they are fulfilled in you already, partially and initially, and shall be, shortly, completely and eternally!

I wish you a rich increase of all grace unto all joy, peace, and holiness, and a massive crown of immortal bliss!

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