

The Root of Sin Is Self Centredness

by Zac Poonen

The root of sin is self-centeredness, and repentance means turning our lives around to be centered in Christ.

Duration: 34:49

Scripture: Matthew 6:9-10, Matthew 16:24, Luke 10:20, Luke 15:20, Romans 12:3, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:3-4, James 4:10, Revelation 4:11

Topics: "Sin Nature", "Christian Holiness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the root of sin, which is self-centeredness. It compares the need to address the root of sin to treating a disease at its source rather than just its symptoms. The message highlights the significance of shifting from a self-centered life to one centered on Christ to experience true holiness and freedom from sin. It also delves into the dangers of a 'give me' attitude, whether openly expressed or hidden, and the need to rejoice in what God has done for us rather than focusing on our own actions.

Transcript

To experience a full salvation, it is very important to know the root of sin. Very often what people call sin is the fruit. We talk about, you know, at the lowest level things like smoking, drinking, gambling, and then we think we go deeper and say, okay, we talk about jealousy and pride and bad thoughts and anger.

We think we have gone deeper. Yes, we have gone deeper than these other people who only think of fighting and quarreling as sin. But John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Jesus, said that Jesus has come to lay the axe to the root of the tree.

That's what he said in Matthew chapter 3. So it is very important for us to understand where the root is in our life because if we don't hit at the root, the fruit will keep on coming and we will have to keep on cutting it off, cutting it off, cutting it off. It is like a disease, you know. In the olden days, they could only treat a disease when it came out.

It came out, you get fever or a sore, and they put some ointment and deal with it when it comes out. But then when, say, people discovered antibiotics, so you have a sore in your hand and the doctor says, the only way to get rid of it is you take a tablet into your stomach and an illiterate person can't understand that. An illiterate person says, how can this thing go by my eating something in the stomach? Because the doctor says the root of this is down there.

And if you deal with it there in your blood, this will stop. But an illiterate person can't understand that. He thinks, no, no, no, you've got to put the ointment here.

When you get rid of it here, it will come here. So, this is how it has been with many believers, even when they seek victory over sin. They think, I've got rid of it, but then something else comes up.

We have to allow Jesus to lay the axe to the root. And the root of sin is self-centeredness. In one word, it is when self is the center of our life.

And the root of holiness is not reading the Bible and doing good things. It is when Christ becomes the center of our life. So, if you can understand this simple truth, the root of sin is when self is the center of my life.

And the root of holiness is when Christ is the center of my life. In other words, either everything revolves around me, or everything in my life revolves around Christ. One of these two.

And I often use the example of astronomy. For so many years, do you know that for thousands of years, man believed that the earth is the center not only of the solar system, but of the whole universe. Because they went by what they saw.

And they could see the sun going round and coming back up again. So, the earth is the center. They saw the moon going round and coming back.

They saw even the stars going round and coming back. And it looked exactly as if the earth is the center of the universe. You can't blame people.

Even clever people, Peter, Paul, they all believed that the earth was the center. But there was a man who decided to question that about seven, eight hundred years ago. And he said, let me check up whether what my parents and grandparents and all believed is true.

And he discovered they were wrong. And discovered that the earth is not even the center of the solar system. And that is how so many truths in science became discovered.

And we got all our equations and answers right when we found the right center. As long as man had not discovered the right center, something was wrong in their calculations and in their understanding of physics particularly. Something was wrong.

Because the center was not right. And in our pursuit of holiness, always there will be a problem. If we think of this as sin and that as sin, and we try to get rid of this and try to judge ourselves, get rid of this habit and that habit, until you hit the root and discover what the right center should be, there will always be a problem.

You won't get the right answer. But when we see that Jesus came to hit the root, that means repentance means then what? Repentance means to turn around from a life centered in myself. Repentance is not just giving up some bad habits.

It is turning from a life centered in myself to a life centered in Jesus Christ. When you understand that, you can never be deceived by a health, wealth gospel. When somebody tells you, you are going to get money.

Is that centered around Christ or yourself? I say immediately I can make out that can't be the true gospel. Because that's centered around me. That's not the real gospel or something more spiritual.

You can go to heaven. Who is that centered around? Is that centered around Christ or me? We say that's more spiritual than believing that Jesus will make me rich or that Jesus will give me healing. Isn't it more spiritual? I'm not like those people who just talk about healing and wealth.

I believe Jesus can take me to heaven. Oh forgive my sin. Who is that centered around? You or Christ? It's you.

Only thing that fellow is looking for money and you are looking for heaven. But it's still you in the center. Man was created for the glory of God.

You know what they sing in heaven? Thou art worthy O Lord. Revelation 4 For thou has created all things and they exist to do your will. For your pleasure they were created.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's what Jesus taught us to pray. So we were created to be centered in God.

And once you understand this my dear brother and sister many things will fall into place. Just like when man discovered that the sun is the center of the solar system and everything goes around it. All their calculations became right.

So what does this mean in practical terms? I need to, when I say judge myself it's not just judging jealousy and pride and few little things but going to the root of it. Is this a self-centered life that I'm living? I get hurt because somebody spoke rudely to me. Who's in the center of your life? You.

That's why you get hurt. If you're not in the center of your life but you're thinking of Christ being in the center what does it matter if somebody said something to you? About you or to you or yelled at you. It's a question of where the center is.

And that's what we see in the story of the prodigal son that we were just listening to. You know in Luke 15 I want you to see Jesus was talking about two backsliders here. First backslider was the younger son and the second backslider is the older son but he doesn't look like a backslider.

And the one who does not look like a backslider is more dangerous backslider than the other one. Because this is a story Luke 15 where in the beginning of the story the younger son is outside the house far away and the elder son is inside the house and at the end of the story the younger son is inside the house and the elder son is outside the house. That's how the story ends.

In a nutshell that is the story. So you got to find out how this younger son who is outside came inside and why the older son who was inside ended up outside because we are all inside. You just got to make sure you don't end up on the outside.

There is one thing both of them said. I want you to listen. The younger son Luke 15,12 came to the father and said Father give me give me is the language of the self-centered man.

Give me money. Give me healing. Give me forgiveness.

Give me heaven. Give me a ministry. Whatever it is.

It can be some spiritual things. Give me, give me, give me. Even give me holiness.

So that I will have a testimony in the church. And we think that the elder son is better. He never said give me.

He kept it all inside. All those years. And sometimes God allows a situation that brings out the corruption inside.

It's a wonderful thing when God does that. When somebody who had done harm to me, I forgave him completely. I really did to the best of my knowledge.

I said Lord I have forgiven him. I have nothing against him for what he did against me. But when I heard that something bad happened to him I was happy.

And the Lord said you have not forgiven him. That's how I discovered. I discovered the corruption of my heart when something good happened to somebody else.

It's exactly like the older son. Have you seen that? Have you ever seen it in your life when somebody you don't like, somebody you hate, maybe some relative or your boss or something, something good happens to them and you feel bad. That shows that your attitude is wrong.

That's the time for you to judge yourself. But the elder son, he could have judged himself. Why am I feeling bad that something good has happened to my younger brother.

As long as something bad was happening to him, he was far away, he was quite happy. But something good happened to him, he suddenly felt bad. Do you find that in yourself or am I only talking about myself? Judge yourself.

I have judged myself. That's why I can speak about it. Because I have cleansed myself.

And what it came out of? The younger son came and said give me. And what is the older son saying? Listen to this. Luke 15 Last part of verse 29.

You never gave me. He is also saying the same thing. All these years you never gave me.

I wanted it. I kept it all inside, this desire to give me, give me, give me. I never said it.

But I wanted it, I wanted it, I wanted it. Who is worse? The one who openly said give me or the one who was inside longing. I hope I get it, I hope I get it.

That's hypocrisy. The only difference between the younger son and the older son was one said it openly and the other kept it inside. And I tell you a lot of people who preach holiness, the only difference between them and a sinner is that fellow does it openly, this fellow has got all those desires inside and he thinks he is holier.

The one who watches internet pornography secretly is worse than the other fellow who openly says hey I watch internet pornography and enjoy it. We think he is the sinner. Actually there is more hope for him.

So be careful of this hidden give me attitude and we can sit in the church and think we are new covenant. We are not new covenant if we haven't hit the root of sin which is self centered give me. You never gave me.

I prayed for the healing of my child, you never gave me father. A little complaint. Do I have such a right? Do I have a right to go to God and ask for anything? I have discovered that I don't have a right for anything.

Everything is mercy. I am thankful for any little thing God gives me. But very often when a believer has a complaint about an unanswered prayer why didn't you let me marry that person? Who do you think you are that God should make you marry that person? What an important person you think you are? Your life is completely centered in yourself.

You are not even old covenant. You are in no covenant. Just like Adam centered in yourself.

Me, me, me. That is the life that Jesus came to deliver us from. Because that is the life that ruins us.

Whether you are like the younger son openly sinful or like the elder son sitting in the church acting holy maybe an elder brother with a secret desire for honor position respect, give me, give me secretly desiring give me some honor there I'd like a little bit of honor I'd like to be an elder I'd like to be invited to preach give me, give me, give me that and feeling very happy when you get it. What's the difference between you and that fellow who crudely asks for it? He's actually more honest. So what does it mean to judge ourselves? If we judge ourselves we will not be judged.

It's the man who takes his Christian life seriously and discovers Lord this wretched self-centeredness is what you came to deliver me. The new covenant is all about being delivered from being centered in myself. Repentance is to be free from being centered in myself and discovering my true center like they discovered in the solar system, it's the sun, to discover that you created me to be centered in you.

That's why you know in the Lord's Prayer it's very interesting to see it. I have written a full book on the Lord's Prayer it's there in the bookstall called God Centered Praying because every request in that is putting God first. Our Father who art in heaven forgive me my sin.

No that's not number one. We would think it is number one because then it's me. No Father hallowed be thy name Your name is not being hallowed because of my sinful life.

That's what I want to think about first. If I begin with our Father who art in heaven forgive me my sin, I'm still centered in myself. Our Father I realize that my way of life has dishonored you not hallowed your name and I'm concerned about that.

I want to hallow your name. Let your name be hallowed and let your kingdom come. That's my second prayer.

Forgiveness of sins and all can wait. Your kingdom must come. Never mind what happens to me.

Never mind if my cancer is not healed. Oh forget that. Let your kingdom come and Lord let your will be done on earth in my life first of all.

Exactly like it is done in heaven where the angels quickly, joyfully do God's will completely. The angels obey God joyfully, immediately and completely. And I say Lord I want to do it exactly like in heaven.

Everything you tell me joyfully, completely, immediately and in order to do your will on earth as it is being done in heaven I need life. So please give me my daily bread so that I can do your will. You got to link the two.

Thy will be done on earth in my life. For that give me my daily bread. Give me enough for my needs.

It's right and that applies to food, clothing, shelter, educating our children, everything so that we can do your will. Then comes forgive me my sins so that I can do your will. And I want to forgive everybody else like you forgiven me.

And I don't want to stop with forgiveness of sins Lord. Deliver me from all evil. Anything that's evil, anything that's unchristlike in my life.

Deliver me from it and don't let me ever be tempted beyond my ability. I know there is a promise. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability but he still wants us to pray for it.

Just like Jesus said your heavenly father knows what you need before you ask him but he still wants you to pray give us this day our daily bread. Your heavenly father knows that you need forgiveness of sins but he still asks you to pray for the forgiveness of sins. So your heavenly father has promised not to allow you to be tempted beyond your ability but he still says pray.

Lord don't let me be tempted beyond my ability.

So it's a prayer the Lord was teaching them in this new covenant you're not to pray like the old covenant in the old covenant they were praying bless me Lord and trounce my enemies it's very interesting to read in the psalms when the psalmist says Lord that enemy take his child and smash his head against the rocks boy there are some churches where they have the habit of reading a psalm every Sunday morning they remain carnal because they read stuff like this dash my enemies heads against the rocks and I wish they had read one of the epistles every morning Ephesians chapter 1 instead of these psalms it's amazing how many Christians live in the old covenant so the Lord is saying there their preoccupation their preoccupation was with get rid of my enemies they are troubling me in so many

ways and Lord there is no rain please give me rain on my crops and help me to prosper it was all centered around what are you going to do for me and as long as a Christian is occupied with all that he doesn't even realize that he is in the old covenant and one of the great works the devil has done in our day is to change the gospel which was preached by the apostles back to this old covenant of give me give me this and give me that and is being taught under the guise of faith faith means claim it ask for it and get it give me give me give me go to God and ask him to give you that's exactly what the prodigal son did messed up his life and that's what the older son also wanted you never gave me complained against God you never gave me this and you never gave me that and you gave it to this

other person it's all old covenant the Lord wants us to free us from that and say father I want your name to be hallowed why do you want to build a church because your name is not being hallowed in this town in this village where I'm living I want your name to be hallowed father that's why I want the church to be built not because I learned something in CFC of building local churches or the importance of local expression of the body of Christ and all these high sounding words begin with father let your name be hallowed in this little town or village where I live let your kingdom let this little manifestation of your kingdom be seen in this village or town let there be a demonstration in this town of a few people who do your will maybe only 4 or 5 maybe 10 whose passion is to do your will

exactly like it is done in heaven Lord give me 10 people like that not just 100 people who come and sing songs and listen to a message and go home no give us a God centered church and if there are only 3

people so be it we don't want a mixture of people who have a self centered life and live in that self centered life but we want to get more and more light on their self centeredness so that more and more their life becomes centered in God that Christ is honored God's name is hallowed and that's how it must be a self centered person like this elder son has got a complaint against God do you have a complaint against God today?

I want to ask you so many years I have served you anybody saying that today? verse 29 so many years I served you yet you never gave me this yet you never gave me that who do you think you are? you think you did a great job by serving God for so many years? what conceit to think that God owes you a big salary now because you served him for so many years as if he needed you there are millions of angels who would serve him 100 times better than you for no salary at all do you know that to serve God is a privilege and an honor it's a tremendous privilege to be able to do something for God but to have this complaint I served you Lord we cast out demons we did miracles all the same spirit now I deserve heaven and the Lord says I never knew you why does he say that to people who did so many

things because he says this in the center of your life there is still sin you are centered in yourself you are thinking of what you did for me many years ago on my birthday I asked the Lord for a word and what I got was this in Luke chapter 10 don't rejoice verse 20 that demons are subject to you but rejoice that your name is written in heaven think of those two things demons are subject to me in the name of Jesus Jack Poonen has done something my name is written in heaven I did nothing for that the Lord says rejoice not in what you did for God but in what God did for you it is a great word to my heart don't rejoice in what you have done for God but rejoice in what God has done for you for which you never deserved anything you never did anything he did it for you it is a God centered life

what he did if my mind is always on what I have done for God it is self centered to be God centered I am thinking more in terms of what God did for me see that puts us all on the same level if I rejoice in casting out demons I am better than all the other people who haven't cast out demons and even if you have cast out demons we count how many did you cast out and how many did I cast out I can be superior to you how many sins have you overcome and how many sins have I overcome and there is always competition even in these spiritual things but when it comes as God has written my name in heaven what did I do when God has written your name in heaven brother we are equal how can we be equal I am 55 years a believer and you were converted yesterday and we are equal that is it that is the

kingdom of heaven do you like to be there in this kingdom where you have been a believer for 50 years and God puts you on the same level as the guy who was converted yesterday that is the kingdom of heaven both rejoicing not in what we did for God but what God has done for us and I will tell you something when we get to heaven if you get there we will you will get there if you are centered in God that is for sure if you are centered in yourself I don't know but when we get there we will discover that everybody is praising Lord because of you because you died we are priests we are not counting how many demons Peter cast out and how many demons Paul cast out and what did this guy do and what did that guy do that is all here on this earth and all the reports people send and we planted

churches here and we have done this that and the other there it is Jesus died for us puts me on the same level as a new convert what about what we did for him we did it out of gratitude we don't take any credit for it because I was forgiven so much I loved much that person was forgiven little he thinks he was forgiven little so he did little it is a tremendous thing when our life is you know the struggle lot of the struggle in our Christian life is because we are trying to live this new covenant life centered in ourselves it just doesn't

work all that effort is wasted it is like a story I heard of a man who was crossing one state to another there was a river between this state and the other state in this state they had prohibition that means you couldn't drink any alcohol and wine and all

that but across the river on the other state you could go and drink so this guy got into his little rowing boat and went across to the other side and tied his boat there and went and had a big drink and enjoyed himself thoroughly and came back to the boat drunk and started rowing back to his home and he didn't seem to be moving he rowed and rowed and rowed and rowed and when daylight came he discovered his boat is still tied to the tree a lot of Christian activity is just like that I am doing this for the lord and that for the lord and I am doing this I am going here I am giving money but my life is still centered around myself snap that and a little bit of effort can take you great distance this is the Christian life it all depends on whether I have cut that thing that ties me to a self

centered life it's not a theory my brothers and sisters this is what the story of the elder son and the prodigal son is two sinners centered in themselves till a day came in one of them where he said I am finished it's true I am coming back still a bit centered in myself because I want food now give me bare necessity that's enough but it's in a different spirit I don't deserve anything first there was a sense of I deserve now there is no sense of deserving I want to ask all of you brothers and sisters when you come to God do you have a sense I deserve this because I have served you so many years or do you say Lord I deserve nothing if you give me what I deserve it is hell everything is God's mercy thank you I am a child of God but it's not because of anything in me I don't have low self

esteem saying oh I am a worm no no no I am a child of God but I don't feel I got it because I deserve it is free that puts me on the same level as others all of you who have a problem with pride looking down on others feeling that you are superior despising others because they are not so cultured or not so educated or not so gifted or a different language or culture or something like that you need to get some light on this you need to cut that tree, cut the rope that's tying your boat to the tree the self centered life you learn to value all the brothers quite easily it won't be a struggle anymore many problems in your life will be solved when you see the root of sin is self centeredness many problems between husband and wife I'll tell you it's only because two self centered people are

trying to live together there's bound to be problems that's why Jesus said the only way is take up the cross, take up the cross means put that self to death there's only one throne in our heart either self is there or Christ is there and when Jesus said take up the cross he meant put that self to death and put me on the throne of your life so that your thought thinks not about how did people treat me or did people respect me or he should be doing this or she should be doing this but Lord I want to glorify you in my life hallowed be your name your kingdom come all the unrest in our life is only because self is in the center in heaven there is no unrest because God is in the center the world is full of unrest because in every heart self is in the center your home will be full of unrest as

long as two self centered people live there at least if one of them is willing to die there will be peace if both are willing to die it will be heaven there will be fellowship the same thing in a church we want to gather together people who do not want to live a life centered in themselves centered in God let's bow before God in prayer Heavenly Father we don't want to just understand these things clever minds can understand these things very quickly and think they have got it Lord bring us into the reality of it in our daily life where Christ is truly the center where the glory of Christ's name is the passion of our heart and doing your will to the best of our knowledge becomes our ambition Lord open our eyes to see this simple secret show us the

root to which you seek to lay an axe

everyday help us to take up the cross and die and follow you we pray in Jesus name Amen

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