

Unhealthy Obsession With Your Sin

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[0:00] Another chapter in Thomas Brooks' book, Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices. Last time we looked at one of his devices to hide the hook when he tempts us and he wants! to sin in that way by hiding the hook in there.

And this week we're going to look at something different. Satan has a lot of tools in his toolbox and we're going to see another one of those. I do want to point out I was in the library Wednesday and we actually have three copies of this book. And so I would encourage you if this makes you thirsty for more, there's more available. As we start then, turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 6.

Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 10. And maybe you know this, but this is the beginning of the section on the armor of God. And as he gets ready to explain the different pieces of the armor of God, he says this in verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

So we saw, why do we need the armor of God? It's because the devil is a schemer. He has schemes. And if we're going to stand against those schemes, then we're going to have to put on the full armor of God. So Satan is a schemer. He's a liar from the beginning. And today we're going to look at one of his favorite schemes. This is a device that if you are a Christian, you are familiar with. Even if you have never thought about it being a scheme, something satanic. It's not a scheme, like I said, to get Christians to sin. It's not like what we talked about a couple, a few weeks ago.

[2:19] It's a scheme to keep them sad and miserable. Do you know that Satan prefers you to be sad and miserable? Satan can't rob you of your crown, but he will do everything he can to steal your comfort and your peace. And a Christian that is experiencing comfort and peace is a fruitful Christian, is a productive Christian, is a is an honor to the Lord and is walking worthy of the gospel. But a Christian that's ran down, depressed, sad, miserable is not generally a very fruitful Christian. And so he'll do everything he can to steal your comfort and peace. Listen to what Brooks says. He will leave no stone unturned, no means unattempted to rob them of their comfort and peace, to make their life a burden and a hell to them, to cause them to spend their days in sorrow and mourning and sighing and complaining and doubting and questioning.

Believer, Satan hates you. He positively hates you. He wants you miserable. And so how is he going to do it? Well, Brooks has a lot of different schemes under this heading of how he can make Christians sad and miserable. And we're just going to look at the first one today. And it's this. He's always going to be pointing you to your sins, always pointing you to your sins, to have you think more about your sins than your savior. And if he can get you to focus more on your sins than on Jesus, then he can make you miserable and unfruitful. Now, we're going to look at six remedies to this device. But before we look at those remedies, I want to first talk about what the sadness is not. What the sadness is not.

We need to be careful because some Christians have the idea that it's wrong always for a Christian to be sad. And that's not true. This sadness over sin is not godly sorrow. There is a godly sorrow that leads to repentance. It's a sorrow that's holy. It's a sorrow that is spiritual. That's the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart. It's a sign of health, not of weakness. It's a sign of grace and life and not something satanic. And so when we sin, should we feel sad? Yes. Yes, we should. Our sin puts a wall between God and us. It puts a cloud over Jesus face. And it hurts our relationship, even if it doesn't cut it off. It does hurt our relationship. We have a personal relationship with Jesus and our sin is offending him. Now, to think that I've sinned against Jesus, who's loved me so much, it shouldn't make me sad.

It's not something I should just shrug off and say it doesn't matter. That sadness is a sign of health and it's a sign of grace. But that's not the kind of sadness that we're talking about this morning. There's a godly sorrow that leads to repentance. It leads us back to Jesus. It soon gives way to joy, not to despair. It's a sadness that takes us out of ourselves. And it makes us to rely more on Jesus. [6:05] There is that godly sorrow. It makes us mistrust ourselves. It makes us more careful. It makes us mistrust ourselves, but to trust and rely more on Jesus. But that's not the kind of sorrow that we're talking about today. That's the sorrow that the sorrow that we're talking about today takes us deeper into ourselves, deeper and deeper. And it takes us further away from Jesus. It keeps Jesus' face clouded. And our life can become this one long sorrow. And Satan loves it. Satan loves it when the clouds roll in.

And that's where we stay. And he does it by having us always thinking on our sins and never thinking about Jesus. Having us always looking at our hearts and our actions and how incomplete they are and how imperfect they are and how full of sin they are. And so then the Lord is not in any of our thoughts.

The wicked have no room in their in their thoughts for God. And sometimes the Christians have no room in their thoughts for God because sin has filled the entire picture and has filled every thought. And so instead of our eyes. Fixed on Jesus, our eyes become fixed on the disease. Instead of the remedy, we fixate on the disease and we can't see the remedy, though it's right there, though God is promising it and we can't hear it, even though he's speaking it to us over and over again. And it's a bad place to be. And some Christians live a long time there. And Satan loves it. So we're going to look at six remedies for the scheme.

And like we saw last time, these generally are remedies of the mind. They're remedies of things that we need to think about. We need to think about Satan tells us lies and that has to do with telling us untruth. And so when our minds are filled with things that aren't true, the call is to think the truth.

[8:16] And so six things, six remedies. And the first is this. Think, though Jesus Christ has not freed you from the presence of sin, he has freed you from the damning power of sin. He has not freed you from the presence of sin, but he has freed you from the damning power of sin. So think, this is a call to think, though Jesus Christ hasn't freed you from the presence of sin, it's going to be there. It is there in your life. It's your constant roommate. He has freed you from its condemning power. So while you live in this world, sin and grace are going to live together, they're going to be roommates. And so the best of Christians have the worst of roommates. The best Christians live with sin. Sin is right there all the time. That's true. You should expect that. But Jesus has freed you from the condemnation of sin.

Let me ask you, what is Romans eight one say? Very familiar verse someone. OK, therefore, there's now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Listen to what Brooks says. The law cannot condemn a believer for Christ has fulfilled it for him. The law cannot condemn a believer for Christ has fulfilled it for him. Let me ask you, when we're focused on our sin and living under this cloud of sadness and grief, what aren't we thinking about? What aren't we thinking about when we're living there?

What's that? We are thinking about me. What aren't we thinking about? We're not thinking about God. We're not thinking about the gospel. We're not thinking about this fact that therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus Christ. The law cannot condemn me because Christ has fulfilled it. Christ has obeyed the law completely for us. And so therefore there's now no condemnation. Brooks goes on. Divine justice cannot condemn us, condemn him for that. Christ has satisfied his sins cannot condemn him for they in the blood of Christ are pardoned and his own conscience upon righteous grounds cannot condemn him because Christ that is greater than his conscience has acquitted him. So let me ask you, when we're living in this perpetual sadness and sorrow and over sin, Brooks says, we're not thinking about some of these things. We're not thinking about that just that justice is satisfied. Justice is satisfied because of Christ. Our sins are pardoned because of Christ and Christ has acquitted us. He's freed us. He's released us from the guilt of our sin.

And so Paul says, who can bring any charge against the ones God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? The answer is no one. Christ Jesus who died more than that, who was raised to life is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. That's the first remedy.

When we are living in the in just perpetual sorrow and guilt of our sin, we never seem to have a sunny day.

[11:48] The first remedy is to think, though you're not freed from the presence of sin, you are freed from its guilt and its condemning power. Remedy number two. Think. Though Christ has hasn't freed you from sin bothering and vexing you, so it's still present. He has freed you from the dominion of sin, the power of sin.

So Christ hasn't freed you from the presence of sin, but he has freed you from the dominion of sin. So sin is a terrible roommate. Terrible roommate. When you go to pray, sin is right there.

When you go to worship, sin is right there. When you do something good, sin is right there. It's always there pressing you, interrupting you, trying to bring forth fruit. That is true.

But sin is not your master. Sin is not your master. Christ has freed you from its power. You see, Satan wants you to think that you have to sin. You can't escape. It's inevitable. He wants you to think that sin rules you, that it has power over you, that there's no point in resisting.

Satan wants you to forget the freedom Christ has given you. Paul in Romans 6 says, we die to sin. So if you die out of, then the rule of the United States has no authority over you, if you die. And Paul's saying, we die to sin. We die to its power. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

[13:39] That's all past tense. We die to sin. That old self was crucified with him. That has happened to you, believer. When you were united to Christ, you died. The old you, the old you and Adam that was guilty and under sin's power is dead. And so he can say later, sin shall not be your master because you are not under law, but under grace. So sin may rebel, but it will not rain. These things are true.

You don't have to do what it says. It doesn't hold power. It doesn't hold authority over you. And that's good medicine for a sad heart. You know what? Sin is right there. And it perplexes us and it vexes us and it irritates us, but Christ has freed us from its power and authority.

So again, what's the medicine for this satanic device? Well, it's to remember what Christ has done for you. Remedy number three. And now we're just, we're piling it on. Brooks is piling it on.

He says, remember the promises of forgiveness. If you are living in under this cloud, you are not remembering that God forgives sinners. He promises forgiveness. Sometimes what Satan wants us to focus on is the holiness of God, the grandeur of God, the greatness of God. And so our sin becomes, it just fills our mind. And, and do you see Satan gives us half the picture? He has this focus on one aspect of God, but then he hides the fact that God says, I will forgive. I forgive.

So what is the person who's focusing on their sin thinking about thinking about their guilt, their helplessness, their helplessness, the distance between God and them, the hopelessness of the situation. They feel constantly dirty. They feel constantly under a cloud and under a curse and how bad their sin is, but they aren't thinking about God's promise of forgiveness. Now I've asked several men to read some of these promises. And as we listen to these, I want you to think, this is not just something that shows up one or two times in the Bible. This is a constant theme. God is a God who forgives sin. Jeremiah 31, 34. Brother.

[16:29] No longer will man teach his neighbor or a man his brother saying, know the Lord, because they all know him. From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. I will remember their sins no more. I won't bring it up against them anymore.

Jeremiah 33, 8. I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive them all the sins of rebellion against me.

Brothers and sisters, isn't that good news? We don't have to carry around the dirt of sin. God says, I'll cleanse it. And these are promises of the new covenant. And so if we're joined to Jesus, we have been cleansed from our sin. And one day we will be cleansed from its presence forever.

But for now, our record has been cleansed. We don't have to carry around that dirt anymore. Isaiah 43, 25. I, even I, am he who blocks out your transgressions, for my sake, and remembers your sins no more.

[17:42] Micah 7, 18. Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgressions for the remnant of his inheritance?

He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love. Do you see, one of Satan's devices is to make God so holy and so grand, but at the same time, so unmerciful and

unforgiving.

And the Bible holds both of them up and says, I, even I, am he. I will forgive you. I will blot out your transgressions. And then finally, Colossians 2, 13 and 14.

When you were dead in your sins and the uncertain situation of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins, having canceled the written code with his regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us.

He took it away, nailed it into the cross. So the Lord has dealt with our sins. He's forgiven them. And he's done it through the work of Jesus on the cross.

[18:57] Now, we could do more. There's a lot there. But, brother and sister, do you live under this perpetual cloud of sorrow over sin?

And there's no room for thinking about God's mercy. I would encourage you to feed on these promises. Maybe you need to take a week, a month out of your normal routine and just sit down and feed on these promises.

Don't go anywhere. Don't be in a rush. Remember that this is the kind of, this is God. This is the God as he reveals himself. He forgives our iniquities for Jesus' sake.

He doesn't hold our sins against us forever. And let the fresh wind of God's grace blow into your heart. Let that fresh wind blow and drive the clouds of sorrow and sadness away.

Remedy four. Think. Christ has paid the whole debt of your sin. Christ has paid the whole debt of your sin.

[20:09] I listen to Dave Ramsey, the financial guy, a lot in the car. And one of his most common pieces of advice is, don't lend money to your family.

Don't borrow money from your family. And the reason is always the same. And he says this, Thanksgiving tastes so much better when you're eating it with your dad instead of your master. You borrow money, the borrower is, Proverbs said, is a slave to the lender. When you borrow money, it fundamentally changes the relationship between two people.

And you become a slave, even if you are a son. Now, some Christians have a slave mentality. Maybe they don't think of themselves like that explicitly, but in their heart, they never sit down and enjoy God as father, son, because they feel this debt is outstanding.

So, they forget that Jesus has paid all their debt. And now God is their father. God is their father.

[21:30] And so, some Christians forget that Christ paid it all. And it's depressing being in debt. It changes your relationship with someone. And so, the message of the New Testament of the Bible is that through Jesus Christ, we are no longer in debt to God anymore for our sins.

Christ has paid for our sins, and he's paid it all. There's not a single sin, past, present, or future, that remains outstanding any longer for the Christian.

Listen to Brooks. Christ has cleared all reckoning between God and us. So, those are accounting words.

So, the whole debt that was on the books and standing against us, Christ has cleared it all. It's no longer there. You remember, he goes on, you remember the scapegoat.

Upon his head, all the iniquities of the children of Israel, all their transgressions, and all their sins were confessed and put upon that goat, and that goat did bear upon him all their iniquities.

[22:39] Why? The Lord Jesus is that blessed scapegoat upon whom all our sins were laid, and who alone has carried our sins away into the land of forgetfulness, where they shall never be remembered more.

Christ is the channel of grace from God. A believer under the guilt of his sin may look to the Lord, look the Lord in the face, and sweetly plead thus with him, It is true, Lord.

I owed you much. But your son was my ransom, my redemption. His blood was the price. He was my surety, and undertook to answer for my sins.

I know that you are satisfied, and Christ has satisfied you to the utmost farthing, to the last penny. So, brothers and sisters, you don't live like a slave with his master anymore, like a slave who is in great debt to his master.

You live with your father. You are no longer a slave, but a son. And since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. So far from being in debt to God, Christ and his grace, and God and the exuberance of his love has taken us from being in debt to God, to being an heir of God.

[24:04] From being absolutely impoverished, to absolutely rich. And so Paul could say, all things are yours in Christ. You own everything if you have Christ.

We're so rich in him. And so when Satan says, look at your sins, look at your sins. There's no hope. There's no future.

There's no point. You're guilty. And you can't escape it. You say, look, you look to Christ. You look to Jesus.

My sins not in part, but the whole are nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Remedy number five. We have two more.

Remedy number five. Think about why God allows his people to be troubled with sin. So this is another call to think.

[25:01] Think about why God allows his people to be troubled with sin. Now, we have to be careful with this one, but we need to think carefully about this.

If God wanted you never to sin ever again after you were converted, from the moment of your conversion onward, he no doubt could have done that.

But God has his own reasons for letting you, for letting sin to still trouble you.

God has purposes. All things work together for good. And sin is one of those things that God knows how to work toward the good of his people.

Now, just think with me for a second. Because you sin, it keeps you humble, doesn't it? We can't have a look down your nose kind of attitude on people, can we?

[26:09] Not when we're thinking about, you know, really, I'm a sinner too. It keeps us humble. It keeps you looking to Christ for holiness. It makes us love Christ more.

It makes us appreciate his sacrifice more. Our life is this continual reminder of what Jesus has done for us. It teaches you more of the mercy of God.

That mercy is something that we learn the depth and the width and the height of as we sin and as we come and we find him full of grace for us.

So sin, as we repent, it teaches us the mercy of God. It weans you away from this world. Weans you away from this world.

It makes you merciful to those who stumble and fall. It makes you merciful to those who stumble and fall. Because you know you're just like them.

[27:08] God has a lesson for you. And he teaches it to you as you sin. And then it makes heaven all the sweeter.

A hope deferred, it can make the heart sick. But a hope deferred also, it stirs up an appetite. You say, I can't wait to be in heaven. I can't wait until I sin no more.

Now, God is not to blame for sin. That's not what we're saying at all. But God has his purposes. And we know in all things that God works together for the good of those who love him.

And all things include your sin. And so, sin is not good in any sense by, in and of itself. But just this, that God knows how to use that for our good.

Now, if God could use the murder of Jesus for everlasting salvation, then he knows how to use even your sin for your good.

[28:13] That's not an excuse to sin or anything like that. But it is a serious call to think. God has greater purposes. Our sin doesn't thwart him.

And said he uses it for our good and for his glory. And so, take heart, brother. Take heart, sister.

Satan wants to overwhelm you with grief. He wants to overwhelm you.

He wants to bear you down. He wants to just pile it on until you become weak, until you're just lying there helpless on the ground. But this is strong medicine. God is sovereign.

And he's sovereign even over our sin. And he has good purposes even with our sin. Remedy number six.

And here's where we're going to come to an end. And this is where Brooks ends. And this is where we're going to end. Think. Believers must repent for being discouraged for their sins.

[29:16] Think. This is going to sound... It sounds kind of counterintuitive, but I hope you'll understand. Believers must repent for their being discouraged by their sins. Let me read what he says here.

This discouragement... And again, remember, this is not godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

This is just a perpetual living in the discouragement of sin.

Of always thinking about sin and never thinking about Jesus. This discouragement springs from their ignorance of the richness, freeness, fullness, and everlastingness of God's love.

And from their ignorance of the power, glory, sufficiency, and efficacy of the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. And from their ignorance...

He's just... Keep going. From their ignorance of the worth, glory, fullness, largeness, and completeness of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And from their ignorance of that real, close, spiritual, glorious, and inseparable union with Christ, which exists between Christ and their precious souls.

[30 : 28] Ah, did precious souls know and believe the truth of these things as they should? They would not sit down dejected and overwhelmed under the sense and operation of sin.

I love this last sentence. God never gave a believer a new heart that it should always lie a bleeding and that it should be rent and torn in pieces with discouragement.

God didn't give you a new heart. He didn't join you to Jesus. He didn't give you the righteousness of Christ. He didn't... Christ didn't die.

He didn't love you so that you could lie there bleeding and rent apart, torn to pieces with your discouragement. That's not God's purpose in doing that.

And when we are like that, it just shows you that we're not believing the fullness and the greatness and the glory and the sufficiency and the wonder of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 32] It's not an innocent thing. It's unbelief. And so, Brooke says, you have to repent from it. Now, do you see why you have to repent?

You aren't believing what God says about Himself. You're believing your own God. You're actually serving another God. The God of your imagination. A God that didn't send His Son to die.

A God that didn't give you the fullness and the righteousness of Jesus Christ and didn't join you to Jesus Christ. You're believing God of your own imagination.

And so, you're calling God a liar even as you wallow in your sin. And that might sound harsh. And we have to be careful in how we deal with each other.

But, as we think about it, we need to realize that that's the only way we're ever going to get out of this dark cloud is if we call it what it is and understand it for what it is.

[32 : 35] Some Christians and some churches think there's some virtue or some extra holiness in being morose and gloomy and just dwelling on the horribleness of sin.

And they think a happy person is not a holy person. But Brooks, who's one of those Puritans, who's one of those people that everyone's always saying, you know, they're so deadly, gloomy.

He says, no. That isn't holy. That's unbelief. That's unbelief. That's not believing the gospel. That's ignorance. It's not holiness.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. True holiness flows out of faith in Jesus Christ. So, Paul says, the life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.

That's the thing that Paul's life flowed out of. That Jesus loved me and he gave himself up for me and so I'm going to live and it was in the joy and the fullness of that grace that Paul lived.

[33 : 45] And so, if this is you, if Satan is overcoming you with the scheme, he's always pointing you to your sin and in all your thoughts, there's no room for Jesus and his mercy and in his grace, see it for what it is and repent.

Look again at Christ. God is full of love for you, dear believer. Jesus' death was enough for your sins. You've been joined to Jesus. You're the bride of the Son of God.

You're righteous in him. And so, repent and believe the good news. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this strong medicine.

We pray that you would teach us again what it means to live upon Jesus, to not dwell in ignorance and unbelief, but to deal with ourselves sternly, that we would remember that Jesus Christ has loved us to preach the gospel to ourselves even as Satan is showing us our sin and our guilt, that we would not mistake his work for the Holy Spirit's work.

And if we find ourselves not resting on Christ, that we would repent and believe. I pray for my brothers and sisters here. It can be so hard and it can be very discouraging and Satan is stronger than we are and wiser and more cunning than we are.

[35 : 29] I pray, Lord Jesus, that you would give us grace and strength in you to overcome him, to resist him, and to stand against his lies.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're dismissed. Thank you.