

The first sermon I ever preached was on the subject of pride. Many people believe that pride is the root of all sin. They point to Lucifer's pride and to the pride of Adam and Eve to make such an argument. However, there is actually something that precedes pride. Pride may be the trunk of the sin tree but it is not the seed from which sin grows. The seed is selfishness or self-centeredness.

Lucifer wanted to be like God for himself. Adam and Eve wanted to make themselves like God. Self-centeredness is source of sin, the spring from which it flows, the seed from which it grows. This is not a theory formulated by some psychologist but truth from God's Word, and over the next several weeks we will look at some of the noxious weeds that are produced by this deadly seed. Our home text for this series is found in 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

While you turn there, I want to issue to you a challenge. It is a challenge that I believe will change your life and will reveal to you whether or not you are selfish.

The challenge is simply this: as we study this passage and others in the Bible that address the list of sins found in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, do not look for those sins in the life of those around you, but in yourself. You see the great danger of self-centeredness is that it becomes the filter through which we live and learn. I have no doubt that if you let Satan have his way you will easily spot these sins in the people sitting around you and even in the pastor teaching you. But what good does it do you if you allow him to direct your attention away from your own sin. If he is allowed to do so, he wins. You will become more critical of your fellow Christians and even more self-centered and self-righteous. So if you see a particular sin, whether it be on this list or not, in the life of a brother or sister, ask yourself if you are guilty of the same. Many times the things that are so obviously wrong with others are so obvious because we also suffer from them. And although it may be painful, be honest. You may deceive yourself but you cannot deceive God.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-9

I. The Seed of Sin - Selfishness

A. Overall Context

1. Last half of ch. 2 discusses approved workmen and the hope that those who have fallen into the Devil's trap may escape
2. Leads into ch. 3, which opens with a depiction of how bad things will become
3. Last days = the time between the ascension and 2nd coming of Christ
 - a. Acts 2:16-19
 - b. Heb. 1:2
4. List of vices = 18
 - a. Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Tim. 1:9-10 (pagans)
 - b. This list applies to those within the church (5)
 - i. Denying its power by resisting the truth
 - ii. Learning but not growing (no actions)

B. Focus

1. Lovers of self = "utterly self-centered"
 - a. The rest of the list sprouts from this seed
 - i. All of these sins have self-interest at the center of them
 - b. These things alienate us from God and from each other.
 - i. We undervalue others, including God, when we overvalue ourselves.
2. The Bible tells us to love God first & foremost
 - a. Matt 22:37-38
3. Then we are to love others
 - a. Matt 22:39

c. Application

1. Avoid such people
 - a. Emphatic command
2. Avoid becoming such people
 - a. Lay down your life
 - i. Matt 16:24; Mk. 8:34-35; Luke 9:23
 - b. Live for Jesus
 - i. 2 Cor. 5:15
 - c. Love others more than yourself
 - i. Phil. 2:3-4
3. Escape the trap of being such a person
 - a. Confession & repentance
 - i. Put truth into action

Paul's description of depravity preceding the return of Christ includes Christians and/or those professing to be Christians. People who hold to some form of religion (they go to church, serve in the church, give to the church) but deny its power. They think they don't need a Savior because they are good enough on their own, or at least they are better than many of those who have accepted him, much like the Pharisee in Luke 18. This is the deadliest danger presented by self-centeredness because it leads people away from God. It truly is a trap of the Devil.

This morning will you allow the Lord to free you from that trap? Will you respond to the Holy Spirit's revelation of your true condition and confess your need for a Savior?

For those of you who have already accepted the salvific work of Jesus on your behalf, how did you do with the challenge this morning? Did the Spirit reveal to you the sin of self-absorption? If so, now is the time for you to come, confess, and repent.