

Descent into Madness

In recent messages we've examined the doctrine of sin – not just in its definition, but in its consequences. So far, we've seen how sin defiles us, how it renders us ineffective, and how its most dangerous form is not open rebellion, but subtle compromise. We don't have such a hard time recognizing and overcoming the direct attacks of Satan, but the greater damage is done by ourselves as we minimize sin.. "it's just a little," "it's just some innocent fun," "it won't really kill, you, it will make you wise, come on, just a little bite."

Today, we're going to look at something even darker—the madness that sin produces when we don't repent of it.

The Bible is full of warnings that sin doesn't just affect your behavior. It clouds your judgment. It hardens your heart. It makes you stupid. And the deeper you go into sin, the harder it becomes to think clearly, choose rightly, or even care about what's true anymore. Sin doesn't just make you guilty. It makes you foolish. And, unchecked foolishness leads to ruin.

We'll look at the tragic example of King Saul – a man who started with potential and ended in self-destruction. It wasn't because of a single great failure. It was because of a pattern of "small" disobediences that he excused, minimized, and justified until he was out of touch with reason or repentance. Saul shows us what happens when sin takes over the heart: it leads to a descent into spiritual madness.

And make no mistake. This madness is not reserved for Old Testament kings. It is the natural end of any heart that refuses to submit to God. But praise the Lord, there is a remedy. It's not found in self-help or human reasoning. It's found in Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God.

1. Sin makes you stupid -

Today we are going to look at the effect of sin unchecked. Sin makes you stupid. I like to call this "the descent into

madness." Saul, Israel's first king, wasn't the worst king. He didn't lead Israel in overt idolatry. But, you can watch him take the steps that led to his madness and ultimately his rejection by God and shameful death.

Saul started off with "just a little" reluctance. Samuel called Israel together and went through the process of elimination to identify Saul as the king, but they couldn't even find him.

1Sam 10:22 Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

Saul was definitely avoiding the call that Samuel had told him earlier was coming. Some people resent God's call in their life and would prefer to not have the responsibility that God wants to bestow upon them. Serving God should not be a question. God does not actually "need" us. He does not call us because of our unique abilities. We don't condescend to serve Him. We serve Him out of gratitude. Reluctance to serve God is because we are ingrates. We don't "let" God save us and then let Him know if we can fit His call into our lives. We should be saying, "Thank you, Lord, for saving me from an eternity of Hell...how can I serve You?"

At first, Saul was winning victories over the Philistines. As one of the battles was approaching, Samuel was being delayed in coming to offer sacrifices on their behalf. There was growing unrest in the camp and the people followed "trembling." Saul could wait no longer and decided to offer the sacrifices himself. Samuel confronted Saul:

1Sam 13:11-14 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: **I forced myself** therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

Saul was already trying to absolve himself of blame and responsibility. It's like he was saying I was stuck doing it because, after all, *you* weren't here. He was blaming Samuel for his own sin. Performing a sacrifice was not the domain of a king. That was reserved for a priest only to do.¹

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

That was bad enough, but things got worse. It wasn't long before Saul had to engage the Amalekites in battle. He was not supposed to spare anyone. But, Saul had "just a little" change in plans. Saul spared Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen which would be used in sacrifices that the people would participate in eating. There was nothing

¹ Deut 10:8
At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.

noble here about wanting to 'save the best for God.' After all, he might have argued, at least he was not doing the sacrifice himself this time.

1Sam 15:10-11,13-15,22-26

Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

11It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

13And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

14And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. **[He was blaming the people for disobeying and saving the animals]**

Samuel replied, "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?" (Vs. 19)

1Sam 15:20-23,26 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God

in Gilgal. [Saul again tried to shift the blame onto the people]

22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

God next called on Samuel to anoint Saul's replacement. You can see quickly Saul turning to madness.

1Sam 16:14-17,23 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit [**a troubled spirit**] from the LORD troubled him.

15And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

16Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

17And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.

Sin eats at your heart and your soul. David, the very one who would take Saul's place, was found and sent to Saul.

23And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp,

and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

It was not long after that that the Philistines put forth their champion Goliath. You should remember how that ended with David slaying that giant. Saul set him up over the men of war, but his jealousy grew as the people sang of how Saul had killed thousands, but David tens of thousands.

1Sam 18:10-11 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand.

11And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

The madness of sin overtook Saul and he pursued him, twice apologizing when David showed he could have killed him but did not. How crazy was Saul? When David was missing from a feast, Saul pointed out to his son, Jonathan, that David was trying to take Jonathan's throne. He was driven to madness so instead of securing the throne for Jonathan, he tried to kill Jonathan, himself, instead!

1Sam 20:31-33 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

Nothing could shake him off the trail to ruin. I am skipping a number of other events, but ultimately, before the battle where he was to lose his life, Saul sought out the Lord for guidance, but the Lord was silent because he had asked only half-heartedly. Saul sank so low that he sought out a witch for advice for the battle.

1Chr 10:13-14 So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, *even* against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking *counsel* of *one that had* a familiar spirit, to enquire *of it*;

14 And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.²

Saul willfully sinned with the excuse always "it's just a little thing," and "I had to do it." His sin made him unacceptable to God and it finally drove him to turn to a witch and his death. We do not sin because of stupidity. Sin *makes* us stupid: ultimately to our ruin or even death!

Eccl 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the

²Even though
1 Samuel 28:6 records that Saul enquired of the Lord, a different Hebrew word is used than in 1 Chronicles 10:13 and 14. The word in 1 Samuel indicates that Saul's enquiry was more perfunctory. The word in 1 Chronicles indicates that he did not pursue God strongly, but that he did pursue the witch of Endor.

heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

2. Stupid breeds stupid -

You see, stupid breeds stupid.

Rom 1:18-32 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

There *is no excuse*. There is no such thing as an atheist.

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections...

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a

reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The sin mechanism at work here is that if one does not take a deliberate step to turn to God, God will let them go in the way they are headed. You *do not* want to win in a fight against God!

Prov 1:24-31 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

Someone might say, "Hey! That's not nice! I should always have a chance to turn to God." Don't count on repenting *some day*. If we are stuck in our consequences, remember that it is only by our choosing.

29 For that they hated knowledge,
and did not choose the fear of the
LORD:

30 They would none of my
counsel: they despised all my
reproof.

31 Therefore shall they eat of the
fruit of their own way, and be
filled with their own devices.

A word of caution here. For the lost, this means that they could get to the point where they place themselves beyond conviction. The child of God cannot get to that point but he is certainly able to sink to great depths of ruin, possibly causing an early death.

1Cor 11:29-31 For he that eateth
and drinketh unworthily, eateth
and drinketh damnation to
himself, not discerning the Lord's
body.

30 For this cause many *are* weak
and sickly among you, and many
sleep.

31 For if we would judge
ourselves, we should not be
judged.

When men and women stand
before God to be judged, they're
not going to be judged primarily
by the sin they committed, but by
the light they rejected.

What is the unpardonable
sin? It is sin against the light [by
rejecting the Holy Spirit]...There
are consequences for doing this.
A person who commits this sin
opens himself up to deception.

Here is how it goes when a
person continually rejects Christ:

God speaks to them, giving
them the light. They have the
truth.

They say in their hearts, "I
don't want the truth," not because
of intellectual problems; they
took pleasure in unrighteousness.
They wanted their sin more than
the light of the truth...They

cannot have their sin and God's truth at the same time.

You see, when you hear truth, you don't just say, "How interesting. I'll put that in my pocket and spend it if I ever need it, but in the meanwhile I'm going to live it up in sin." No. When you choose sin, the baggage that comes with that sin is error, and God will send you strong delusion.

There are people with eyes wide open, knowing better, who sin not only against redemption and reason, but against revelation. That choice brings with it deceiving power. When you talk to a person who has committed the unpardonable sin, he'll say, "Well, I just don't see it." He's not lying. He doesn't see it.

No one can be saved unless the Holy Spirit opens his eyes. But when you steadfastly, continually say no to the Holy Spirit, you put out your own eyes, and the Holy Spirit ceases to strive. You can sin against light, and that's when light goes out on the road to Hell.

— Adrian Rogers

3. Jesus is the remedy for stupid -

There is a remedy for sin-stupidity and the descent into madness. Fill yourself with the knowledge of Christ.

Col 1:9-14 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power,

unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

2Tim 4:2-4 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

We have to have such a high regard for God's Word and His truth that we cease from our own wisdom and turn to Christ.

You may think you're just living life your way, but sin has a way of twisting your thoughts and hardening your heart until you can't even recognize truth anymore. That's not freedom—that's madness. You were not created to spiral deeper into foolishness. You were created to know God.

If you've never turned from your sin and trusted Jesus Christ, let today be the day. Don't wait until your heart is so calloused that you no longer feel conviction. "He that believeth not is condemned already"—but the gospel is the remedy. Jesus died to break the cycle, to forgive you, and to give you a sound mind. Call on Him today while there is still light.

Christian, sin can still cloud your thinking. When you let disobedience fester—when you justify "small" compromises—you're not being clever, you're becoming blind. Don't take the

first step on the path that Saul walked. Stop minimizing sin. Stop saying, "It's not that bad."

"Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Saturate your thoughts in the Word. Fill your heart with the knowledge of Christ. If you feel far from God today, come home. Repent. Return to the One who gives wisdom, who restores sanity, and who walks with His children in truth.

1. Sin makes you stupid - 1Sam 10:22, 13:11-14, 15:10-11,13-15,22-26, 15:20-23,26, 16:14-17,23, 18:10-11, 20:31-33 , 1Chr 10:13-14, Ecc1 8:11
2. Stupid breeds stupid - Rom 1:18-32, Prov 1:24-31, 1Cor 11:29-31
3. Jesus is the remedy for stupid - Col 1:9-14, 2Tim 4:2-4