

Theme: In our struggle against sin, it is important that we learn to cut the root vices that feed sin, and to practice habits that encourage virtues that feed godly character.

I. Intro - The Seven Root Vices

- A. Seven - movie on seven deadly sins
- B. Harpers ad campaign for 7 deadly sins (lust) - every ad agency wanted to have lust
- C. Seven deadly sins board game - "Knowledge can get you places, but you've got to SIN to WIN!"
- D. Seven deadly sins in our cultural consciousness - but we have made light of them and actually even encourage embracing many of them!
- E. Do we really have to sin to win in life?
- F. What are these seven root vices? Why call them root vices instead of deadly sins?
- G. How do I cut the vices and strengthen virtue?
- H. Our series for Lent 2018 - Se7en - The Root Vices

II. The Destructive Power of Sin

- A. God is watching and examining our ways
For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths. Proverbs 5:21
 - 1. Our ways - speaking of our conduct, good or evil
 - 2. God sees and knows all; nothing is hidden from Him
 - 3. God is examining the way we live - this is meant to be a sobering thought that prompts us to live in holiness

- B. Sin ensnares and binds us
The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. Proverbs 5:22
 - 1. Sin is not inert - it has consequences
 - 2. Sin ensnares - it is a trap that holds us in habits
 - 3. Sin binds us with cords, making escape very difficult
- C. Sins desired outcome - death
He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. Proverbs 5:23
 - 1. The wages of sin is death - our physical death
 - 2. Sin also kills relationships, wealth, reputation, joy
 - 3. Satan deceives us into thinking we can sin with impunity, but sin always exacts a price in relationships, reputation, and joy
- D. We must be very earnest to kill sin before it kills us
Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you. — John Owen, The Mortification of Sin

III. Se7en - The Root Vices That Feed Sin

- A. The roots that feed other sins - Matt 5:21-22, 27-28
"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment...²⁷"
"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28

1. Jesus condemns not just final sin, but its root cause
2. Anger is the root vice that feeds the sin of murder
3. Lust is the root vice that feeds the sin of adultery
4. This means that it is not enough to prune the fruit of individual sins; we must cut the root of the vices that nourish them
5. Until the underlying disposition is cut and uprooted, the sin will never truly die

B. A brief history of the seven deadly sins

1. The seven deadly sins do not appear as a list in Scripture. All of them are certainly called sin, but the list does not appear
2. A list of root sins was first laid down by Evagrius of Pontus, a desert monk who lived from 345-399
 - a. He had inherited these ideas from predecessors
 - b. Not a defined list; common struggles monk faced in putting off sin and putting on virtue
 - c. His original list had 9 items, and some are not on our list
3. John Cassian wrote them down & brought West
 - a. He listed 8 vices
 - b. He developed an organic metaphor of tree (and also stream)
 - c. These were “capital” vices - they were the fountainhead of other sins
4. Pope Gregory joined some together and added envy to create the list as it is known today

5. The list as it is usually known - Pride; Envy; Wrath; Sloth; Greed; Gluttony; Lust
6. This list is not the only way to look at this, but it is a great list developed over centuries of Christian experience in fighting sin and growing in virtue
7. It is a tool to help us understand the root causes behind our behavior, and how to fight against our sin and grow to be more like Jesus

C. Seven Deadly Sins or Seven Root Vices?

1. Why do we call them root instead of deadly?
 - a. The original meaning was ‘capital’ or ‘source’
 - b. The best metaphor is an organic one like a tree - these are the “roots” and “branches” that nourish and produce the fruit of sins in our lives
 - c. The word ‘deadly’ often has two wrong connotations
 1. Linking with ‘mortal’ sins - the RCC idea that some sins kill grace while others don’t. This whole idea is unbiblical
 2. That these sins are the worst possible sins - when they clearly are not!
 - d. This is why we will call them ‘root’ rather than ‘deadly’
2. Why call them ‘vices’ instead of ‘sins’
 - a. Sins refers to discrete acts that violate God’s will
 - b. Vice refers to habits and settled dispositions rather than merely discrete acts
 - c. Rebecca DeYoung - sin is a snapshot; vice is a movie

- d. We use vice because we are looking at underlying habits and dispositions that feed the sins we struggle with in our daily lives

D. The soil that feeds the root vices - disordered love

1. For many, pride has been the root and trunk, and the other 6 vices were the branches so to speak
2. I think that the real underlying issue is actually disordered love - our tendency to desire something more than God and apart from God.
3. Disordered love strengthens the vices, encouraging us to find our identity in something other than God, attempting to seek fulfillment in something besides God Himself.

Be quite rid of the old haunting suspicion – which raises its head in every temptation – that there is something else than God . . . some kind of delight [which] he ‘doesn’t appreciate’ or just chooses to forbid, but which [would] be real delight if only we were allowed to get it. The thing just isn’t there. Whatever we desire is either what God is trying to give us as quickly as he can, or else a false picture of what he is trying to give us – a false picture [which] would not attract us for a moment if we saw the real thing. (The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis, Volume II)

4. The vices then produce the fruit of sinful actions in our lives
5. An overview of the Seven Root Vices & the remedy
 - a. The seven root vices grow out of disordered love, our tendency to desire something more than God.
 - b. The seven root vices are formed as we try to find our identity in something other than God, attempting to seek fulfillment in something besides God.

- c. The seven root vices are habits and dispositions of character which nourish and produce the fruit of sin our lives.

- d. The seven root vices are opposed by corresponding virtues, which oppose the vice and form Christlike character in us.
- e. God has given us practices of resistance to reorder our love, cut the root vices, and encourage Christlike virtues.

6. Our spiritual formation, especially our overcoming sin and growing in Christlike virtues, is often undermined because we do not properly understand the process described above

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I see that sin ensnares me, destroying my joy?

1. Sin and vice are not a game! They destroy everything they touch
2. Don’t believe the lie - sinning does not produce winning; it produces death to whatever it touches
3. We were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever - but sin and vice destroy our capacity and ability to know, love, and enjoy God and His gifts (the book *Killjoys*)
4. Virtue, on the other hand nurtures and increases our capacity to glorify God and enjoy Him - now and forever!

B. Our labor together - Killing vice, growing virtue

1. Between now and Easter we will labor together
2. This is a labor to kill vice and grow virtue in our lives

3. We will be learning to lay the axe of God's Word and will to the root vices in our lives
4. But it is not enough to kill vice - we must also grow virtue
5. We must learn the practice of **putting off**, **putting on** **Put to death**, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry... ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have **taken off your old self with its practices** ¹⁰ and have **put on** the new self, which is **being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator**... ¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves** with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Colossians 3:5, 9–10, 12
 - a. We must put off our old vices with their practices
 - b. We must put on the virtues of Christ
 - c. This is sanctification - by God's power WE PUT OFF and PUT ON
6. Each week we will seek to understand the vice, but also the opposing virtue, and see practices that help us put off the vice and put on the virtue
7. There will be short daily readings from Scripture, and questions to help us apply God's Word
8. I also encourage everyone to fast one day each week - this is one major practice that helps us put off vice and put on virtue
9. I also encourage giving up something that consumes your time - to give space to build new practices in your life

C. The Feasting Table

1. The soil that nourishes sin is disordered love
2. At this table we reorient our love
3. God calls us away from the junk food of false desires, to the True Food that nourishes our soul
4. Come and feast, and ask God to renew your hunger for Him

The Seven Root Vices

Proverbs 5:21-23

February 4, 2018

Communion

Hebrews 13:2--21

Teaching keywords: Lent; sin; character; sanctification; temptation; confession and repentance; fasting

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20–21

For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths. ²² The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. ²³ He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. Proverbs 5:21–23