

A PRACTICAL REASON TO STOP SINNING

John 5:1-16

by Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Everybody has a fire story. Let me tell you Lydia's. Not long after Lydia and I met she told me that she didn't like fire, and that she didn't light a match until high school, and that was only because it was at a church function (adult supervision). I always thought that was weird. Then a few years later she figured out why. When she was seven or eight years old, her family made a brush fire in the back yard. Her dad taught her how to smother the fire with dirt, and then to rekindle the fire by hitting it with the shovel. She thought that was the coolest thing. Eventually her dad went inside for the night, leaving her to play with the fire by herself. He told her to be sure to smother the fire before she went inside. She thought she did, but apparently not. She went inside to take her bath, and when she got out, she heard and saw a lot of commotion in the back yard through the window. Her mom and dad and brother, and several of the neighbors were working together to put out the forest fire next to their back yard that had started with Lydia's fire. Lydia learned then not to play with fire.
2. Today I want to talk to you about a different kind of fire – the fire of sin. Sin is a fire that you don't want to play with, ever. But it is not like a normal fire. A normal fire, if controlled, can be used for good. It can provide heat, be used for light, and cooking. It's useful as long as you keep it in the fire place. But the fire of sin cannot be controlled. You cannot keep it in the fire place. Your only hope is to not play with it at all. If you do, it will burn you badly. Today we're going to look at a story that illustrates this truth.

II. TEXT: John 5:1-16

1. *1 After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. 3 Within these lay a large number of the disabled—blind, lame, and paralyzed.*
 - i. Festival: John doesn't tell us which festival this is, but it was probably one of the big three. Remember that there were three obligatory Jewish feasts every year – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Every adult male Jew who lived within fifteen miles of Jerusalem was legally bound to attend (Deut 16:16; Ex 23:17). So, Jesus went to Jerusalem for the festival.
 - ii. Sheep Gate: Jerusalem has been surrounded by a wall for nearly 5,000 years, and it has several gates into the city. The Bible mentions 19, for example, the Corner Gate, the Valley Gate, the Ephraim Gate, the Gate of the Foundation, the Fountain Gate, and the most famous, the Dung Gate. This story happens near the Sheep Gate.

- iii. Pool of Bethesda: The story happens at the Pool of Bethesda. Bethesda means “House of Mercy.” The pool had “five colonnades,” or covered porches, under which many disabled people rested. Why? The people believed that this was a healing pool. It was fed by a spring, and every once in a while the spring would gush and cause the waters to stir. The people believed that this was an angel stirring the water, and that the first person in the pool would be healed.
- 2. *5 One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to get well?”*
 - i. Do you want to get well? This seems like an odd question, right? The man had been suffering from a disability for thirty-eight long years; it’s safe to assume he wants to be healed. Not necessarily. Jesus’ question is very important, because it reveals a truth about human nature. Not everyone wants to get well. Some prisoners prefer life on in the inside. Some slaves prefer life in bondage. Some addicts don’t want deliverance. Some poor people don’t want a job. Some people don’t want healing in their marriage.
 - ii. Jesus’ question also reveals a fundamental truth about experiencing God’s power. If you want God to help you, you have to really want His help. You must have intense, sincere desire. If you don’t really want to get well, then God can’t help you.
- 3. *7 “Sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”*
 - i. This man did want to get well, but he was so disabled that he was too slow to be the first one into the water when they were stirred.
 - ii. “I have no one to put me into the pool.” There are some people who have no one to help them. Some people are all alone in this world. God loves these people, and He wants to help these people. How? Through His church. Through His body. Through His hands and feet. As Christians we must be on the lookout for people who need help; people who are all alone; and we must show them the love of Christ. That’s what Jesus did.
- 4. *8 “Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk.” 9 Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.*
 - i. Here we see another insight about experiencing God’s power. Obedience. When God is ready to help you, He is going to tell you do something. You must exercise your will. You must be willing to do your part. Jesus gave this man three commands: Get up, pick up your mat, and walk. His breakthrough would not come until he was obedient. God often stands ready to help, but we’re standing in our own way. We’re not doing our part. We’re not being obedient. Sometimes we don’t obey Jesus because we think

obedience is impossible. We think His command is impossible. But just like this story, Christ always empowers us to follow His instructions.

5. *Now that day was the Sabbath, 10 and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat."*
 - i. The Jews. Remember that the term "the Jews" in the gospel of John almost always refers to the Jewish leaders, the members of Sanhedrin – the Pharisees, and Sadducees, and scribes.
 - ii. The Sabbath. Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath, and this upset the Jewish leaders. The law of Moses prohibits working on the Sabbath, which meant don't carry out your normal work on the Sabbath like it's just another day. It's meant to be a day to honor God and to rest. But the Jews took the law of the Sabbath and complicated it; they made it a burden instead of a blessing. They defined thirty-nine classifications of work. They said it was a sin for a man to carry a needle in his robe on the Sabbath. Some said that it was a sin to wear your false teeth, or your artificial leg on the Sabbath. They said it was a sin to wear a decorative pin on your clothing on the Sabbath.
 - iii. And the Jewish leaders took the Sabbath rules very seriously. Breaking the Sabbath was one of the reasons that God judged the nation of Judah and sent them into exile for seventy years in Babylon, so they believed that following the Sabbath was essential for avoiding God's wrath. It was also believed that following the Sabbath was essential for the coming of the Messiah. They believed that if the nation of Israel would unite and keep the Sabbath perfectly for two consecutive weeks, the Messiah would come. The penalty for Sabbath-breaking was either to be thrown out of the community, or death by stoning.
 - iv. This incident was the beginning of the Jews' hatred of Jesus, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath by healing, but he was instructing others to break the Sabbath, such as this man.
 - v. This is a reminder that good deeds are not always rewarded. Jesus did a wonderful act of compassion for a suffering man, and all the Jews cared about was that He broke their Sabbath traditions. If you are expecting the world to applaud your devotion to God and your good deeds, you are in for a big letdown. As you follow Christ, stand for what's right, and even try to love others in the name of Jesus, you will sometimes be misunderstood, criticized, condemned, judged, hated, and even attacked. This is why we're not to do our good works to be seen by men. We must live for an audience of one. If the world applauds, that's fine. But if the world hates us, that's fine too.
6. *11 He replied, "The man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' "*

7. *12 “Who is this man who told you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk’?” they asked. 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.*
8. *14 After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.” 15 The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.*

- i. *“Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.”*

Apparently, the man was not merely physically disabled, he was spiritually disabled. He was a sinner. He was living in active rebellion against God.

Jesus told him that if he did not repent, something worse would happen to him. Jesus was telling the man to stop sinning, or something worse would happen – something worse than his physical disability.

III. **BIG IDEA: Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.**

1. I want to zoom in on the words of Jesus in verse 14, and think about what they mean for us.

2. **THREE INSIGHTS ABOUT SIN AND SUFFERING**

i. **Not all suffering is the result of personal sin.**

1. The Bible is full of examples of godly people suffering, not just in spite of their godliness, but often because of it.
2. Eleven of the twelve apostles were martyred for their faith.
3. The apostle Paul listed many of his sufferings, and then ultimately he was killed for his faith.
4. John the Baptist was beheaded for his faith.
5. Job lost almost everything, and he was a very righteous man.
6. Joseph was a righteous man, and he was sold into slavery by his own brothers, and then falsely convicted and imprisoned for sexual assault.
7. David was a man after God’s own heart, but he had to spend four years as a fugitive on the run because King Saul was jealous and wanted to kill him.
8. The most obvious example of the godly suffering is Jesus. Isaiah 53 describes Christ’s suffering.
 - a. **Isaiah 53:3** “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn’t value him.”
 - b. Verse 4: He bore our sicknesses and carried our pains.
 - c. Verse 5: He was pierced and crushed.
 - d. Verse 7: He was oppressed and afflicted.
 - e. Verse 8: He was cut off from the land of the living.

9. So, let's be clear that not all suffering is the result of person sin.

There are many different kinds of suffering:

- a. God uses adversity to move us to where He wants us (Gen 39:6-20).
- b. God uses adversity to make us stronger (Judges 3:1-2).
- c. God allows us to go through trials so He can glorify Himself by delivering us (Ex 14:1-4).
- d. God allows us to suffer financially to protect us from the temptations of prosperity (Dt 6:10-12).
- e. God allows us to suffer to protect us from the sin of pride (2 Cor 12:7).
- f. Sometimes our suffering is caused by someone else (Jonah 1).

10. Adversity is not a sign that God is angry with you, or that God is punishing you. There are many different causes of suffering.

ii. Some suffering is the result of personal sin.

1. The lesson from this story is that some suffering is the result of sin.
2. King David provides a good example. This is a man that loved the Lord; this man was God's favorite, if you will. But when David sinned, the Lord punished him.
 - a. Because of David's adultery with Bathsheba, God allowed their newborn son to die. 2 Sam 12:15-19
 - b. Also because of his adultery, God told David that the sword would never leave his house. 2 Sam 12:10
 - c. Again because of his adultery, God allowed David's own son, Absalom, to betray David and attempt to steal the crown. Absalom raised an army, invaded Jerusalem, sent David on the run, and slept with David's concubines in broad daylight. 2 Sam 16:22
 - d. David acted against God's will by taking a census of the nation. God responded by sending a plague on Israel that killed seventy thousand men. 2 Sam 24:11-17
 - e. God also caused David to get sick because of his sin. **Psalm 32:3-4** "When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat." **Psalm 38:1-8** "Lord, do not punish me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has pressed down on me. There is no soundness in my body because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have flooded over my head; they are a burden too heavy to bear."

My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. I am bent over and brought very low; all day long I go around in mourning. For my insides are full of burning pain, and there is no soundness in my body. I am faint and severely crushed; I groan because of the anguish of my heart.”

3. What are the different ways that God might punish your sin? In as many different ways as you can imagine. Let’s just look at the example of David. God punished him with loss, with conflict and relational problems, with sickness, with financial and career difficulties (through the loss of seventy thousand men).
4. Are you suffering or struggling? It could be because of your sin.
5. Why does God punish us for personal sin? To teach us obedience. **Psalm 119:67** “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.”

iii. If you continue to sin, something worse will happen to you.

1. You may not be suffering right now. You may be living in a period of prosperity. But be assured and warned that if you continue in sin, suffering is coming.
2. **Psalm 7:11-13** “God is a righteous judge and a God who shows his wrath every day. If anyone does not repent, he will sharpen his sword; he has strung his bow and made it ready. He has prepared his deadly weapons; he tips his arrows with fire.”
3. There are two kinds of suffering that God inflicts upon sinners:
 - a. Earthly suffering: God will punish you in this life.
 - i. **Psalm 145:20** “The Lord guards all those who love him, but he destroys all the wicked.”
 - ii. **Proverbs 3:33** “The Lord’s curse is on the household of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous.”
 - b. Eternal suffering: God will punish you in the next life.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** “9 Don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males,, 10 no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God’s kingdom.”
 - ii. “What if I’m saved?” If your mindset is that since you are saved, you can sin all you want without worrying about eternal consequences, it is possible that you are not saved. The Bible is clear that true believers don’t live in sin.

IV. APPLICATION

1. Repent of all sin and pursue holiness.
 - i. **Luke 13:3** “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.”
 - ii. What is sin? Sin is any failure to obey God’s commands, either by commission or omission.
 - iii. What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God in obedience.
 - iv. One of the great examples of repentance in the Bible is the people of Nineveh. God sent Jonah to preach to them that in forty days God would demolish them.
 1. **Jonah 3:5-10** “Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least. 6 When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 Then he issued a decree in Nineveh: By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. 8 Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish. 10 God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.”
 - v. Common sins today: Porn; premarital sex; adultery; stealing; cheating (work, school, taxes, etc.); lying; dishonoring your parents; drunkenness; drug abuse; not tithing; abusing your body with poor diet, or lack of exercise, or using tobacco; gossip; dirty language; not being involved in church; not discipling your kids.
2. What if you are suffering because of personal sin? Is there any hope? Yes.
 - i. **2 Chronicles 7:13-14** “13 If I shut the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the grasshopper to consume the land, or if I send pestilence on my people, 14 and my people, who bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.”
 - ii. **Acts 3:19** “Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”
 - iii. The fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace (Gal 5:22).
 - iv. If you will turn back to the Lord, He will heal you. He will remove your suffering.

V. CONCLUSION

1. Sin is a fire that you don’t want to play with. It will burn you every time.

2. If you are living in sin today, would you repent? Repent so that God will remove your current suffering. Repent to avoid future suffering.
3. Listen once more to the words of Jesus in **John 5:14** "Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you."