

Supreme Selfishness

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(Many ideas and concepts came from the writings of Charles Finney)

Selfishness is the core and the foundation from which every form of outward sin flows. It is the source and cause for all transgressions. Every disobedient thought, action, or deed must have supreme selfishness as its root. Where supreme selfishness exists, you will always find some form of sin.

Supreme selfishness is willing self-gratification contrary to the law of God. It is the voluntary choice to be governed by desires, feelings and emotions. The desire itself is not selfishness, but submitting the will to be controlled by it is. Supreme selfishness is the whole of sin. It is a preferred state of mind and heart. This is true indwelling sin because all forms of outward evil spring forth naturally from this state of being.

The most important fact about this indwelling sin is that its existence is the direct result of free choice. No person is born in a state of supreme selfishness. It is an intelligence act to put one's own personal pleasure and happiness above God and others. Each person chooses to violate his own intelligence and conscience when they sin. Every person is born with some degree of light and knows that selfishness is wrong.

The true Christian truly loves God and lives to bring Him pleasure. The sinner truly loves himself and lives to bring himself pleasure. These are opposing states of the will or heart. It is the aim and the direction of the will that decides all sin and holiness. Every person should understand that sin and holiness are entire units and not just isolated acts. All outward sin is the result of a selfish heart. All obedience and holiness are the direct result of a holy heart. The heart alone is the source of all moral actions whether good or evil.

True repentance is the change from a wicked heart to a holy heart. It is not possible to repent and still knowingly remain in some secret sin. Repentance can never be partial. It must be a total and complete change. No person can be partially sinful and partially holy simultaneously. No holy act, word or deed will ever come forth from of a selfish heart. The selfish heart will never love God or keep his commandments. The sinner's chosen selfish state is the complete opposite of what God requires.

Some people think that repentance takes place when a person starts to do certain things and then avoids doing other things. A person can change many outward actions without true repentance. A person can stop drinking, stop drugs, stop swearing, stop smoking and break many bad habits. This person then could join a church, get baptized, sing in the choir and perform many other religious activities. Any person can change their actions without ever changing their ultimate aim and direction. All they really accomplish is to exchange one form of selfishness for one that appears to be more acceptable.

A person can embrace the teachings of Christ and really believe and know all the facts of the gospel without ever repenting. He can practice "churchanity" and follow religious traditions and rituals without ever experiencing the true life of Christ. True Christianity is not just knowing biblical facts, or the practice of Christian traditions and rituals. True Christianity is the very life and essence of Jesus Christ living and dwelling within the believer.

I John 5:12 "He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life." This life is not something that God gives but is Himself, Christ and the Holy Spirit living and dwelling within the believer. The reality of Christ actually living within a person's being is the only core of true Christianity. Any practice of religion without the life of Christ is only death.

Matt. 7:21-23 "Not every one that says to me Lord, Lord shall enter into heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in Your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity."

The people whom Christ refers to really accomplished what they said. The problem was they still had a selfish heart. They only did these things to further their own selfish interests. Just because a person has supernatural powers does not mean he is a true Christian. You must understand that true Christianity is not something you have without being under the rulership of Christ. Church membership, operating certain supernatural powers, emotional experiences with God and many other considerations can lead a person to a false belief that he is a Christian.

Much of the preaching that we hear today has been watered down and diluted. It has very little positive effect and usually it has a negative effect. Many think they are Christians because they believe the biblical truths concerning Christ. They believe the facts of Christ's virgin birth, His sinless life, His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Many even believe that Christ died on the cross for their sins. True salvation is not knowing and believing these facts. It is experiencing and knowing the person of Christ.

Many are told they are Christians just because they agree with some statement of doctrine or repeat a sinner's prayer. Many say a prayer to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and then think they have a place reserved in heaven. Much of today's gospel is false and only leads a person to a false hope and security. I even heard some preach that you can receive Christ as Savior but not as Lord. This is totally untrue. If Christ is not your Lord then He can not be your Savior. No one can serve two masters; either you serve Christ or you serve yourself. No other choice is possible. Christ is either Lord of all or He is not Lord at all.

Many preachers teach that Christ is a personal Savior to help people get out of trouble and danger. They present Christ as anxious and ready to assist anyone who will simply sign a permission slip for him to be Savior. These preachers neglect to say that true

Christianity is following and obeying Christ. Even Christ said that many people who call Him Lord are not His followers because they fail to do His will. Just calling Christ Lord does not make Him the Lord of your life.

Do not fall into deception. If Jesus Christ is your King and Lord you will obey and follow him. John 5:56 "He who does not obey the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." I John 2:4 "The one who says, 'I know Him' but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Personal faith, obedience, holiness, moral perfection and righteousness are not optional. These are requirements for salvation, not something that you may apply if you want a deeper experience in Christ. God does love us and has a wonderful plan for our life, but preaching this truth is not evangelism. The gospel is not a sales pitch that has 5 or so easy steps to heaven.

The sinner must see his sin as a crime worthy of eternal punishment in hell. Sin is not an inescapable slip of a helpless victim. Sin is rebellion against God. The sinner when truly convicted will beg for mercy because he knows that he is a criminal that truly deserves Hell. Unless a sinner turns from sin and bows to Jesus Christ as Lord, he cannot have eternal life.

In Luke 18:18-27 and in Mark 10:11-27 we have the story of a man who came and bowed to Christ and asked Him for eternal life. Christ did not accept this man. Jesus told him to sell all that he had and to follow Him. The man went away because he was unwilling to obey Christ's command. Christ knew that this man loved his riches more than Him. The only way Christ would accept him was if this man had obeyed Him.

In most of the churches today, if this same man said he wanted eternal life he probably would hear the modern gospel. He would hear that Christ was ready to accept him as he was. All he needed to do was to believe and accept Christ as his personal savior. He would repeat a sinner's prayer or agree with some doctrinal statement. Most preachers then would tell him that he was now a Christian and would go to heaven when he died. He could experience a degree of peace and safety. The preacher then probably would tell him to never doubt his Christianity because Christ never lies. This man would now believe that he was really a born again Christian.

Now other members of the church would accept and embrace this man as a Christian. He could become a faithful church member. He might even get involved many church activities. This is all a delusion because this man's sin would remain. He never repented and would still love money and things more than Christ. He still remained in his selfish state, unwilling to truly obey and follow Christ. Unless he fully repented, Christ would never accept this man no matter how many doctrinal statements he agreed with or how many sincere prayers he said.

Matt. 16:24 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Mark 8:34 "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Any man that will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Luke 9:23 "And Christ said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Would your church give this man the same demands that Christ did or give him some modern gospel? Christ has not changed or lowered his requirements concerning salvation. Every person that wants salvation must "sell everything". Christ can never accept a person who loves something else more than Him. They must come to God with repentance before any acceptance is possible.

Many who consider themselves Christian think they have a ticket to heaven. Christ did not die on the cross to pass out tickets. He died to make it possible for man to be reconciled to God. Christ only removed obstacles that made it impossible for man to have fellowship with God. He made it possible for man to really have a pure heart and truly obey all of God's commands.

I believe there are thousands who believe they are born again believers because they have repeated prayers and believed this modern gospel. This deception is truly a serious problem. Some people are so convinced they have salvation that they refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit. They think they are born again and are going to heaven. They think they are safe in Christ's arms but have no true obedience or love for God. What a delusion. God will lovingly deal with them trying to show their error but if they refuse to listen and repent they will spend eternity in hell.

Christ's death on the cross did not provide God with special blood stained glasses that somehow let God see any sinful man as holy and righteous. God is not stupid; He will never see a person who is living totally for himself as obedient and holy no matter what biblical fact this person agrees with.

The following verse warns that everyone receives payment for his disobedience. If you do not fully obey God you can never expect to get to heaven.

Heb. 2:2-3 "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."

The word "if" occurs 1595 times in the King James version of the bible. Every time the word "if" is used there are certain conditions that a person must fulfill before experiencing any result. Here are just two examples:

John 8:31-32 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Col. 1:21-23 "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in His sight: If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."

A true Christian must keep doing God's will. Any person who starts to follow Christ can turn back again unto his own selfish way. The bible is full of threats and warnings for these type people. Heaven is a place reserved for the holy and righteous. The only guarantee of heaven that any person has is if he follows Christ and keeps obeying Him each day.

Faith is not just a one time act. It is a constant and continual requirement. The bible says that the just must live by faith. Faith must be a vital and living reality always within the true believer. True faith is not just knowing the right facts. A person's head knowledge of biblical facts does not please God. A person may know all the necessary facts but unless he uses his knowledge in faith he can never receive any Spiritual benefit.

Remember that without faith it is impossible to please God and that whatever is not of faith is sin. True faith takes what is needed to achieve the desired result. Christ offers salvation and victory over all sin. Having this knowledge will not get you to heaven but receiving what is necessary and using it to overcome sin will. True faith always will take and use the grace of God for Spiritual success.

You may say you believe in the grace of God. This belief accomplishes nothing if you do not receive the grace needed and use it to fulfill all the requirements of the law. Do not deceive yourself; if you really believe, you will experience the results.

Matt. 7:13-14 "Enter ye in at the straight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it."

God brought many thousands of people out from Egypt in the old testament. Of all these people only two received all that God had prepared for them. God works with millions today and only a few will receive the salvation that He has for them. The bible warns us not to follow their example of disobedience and unbelief.

Heb. 3:15-19 "While it is said, today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

A person hardens their heart when they hear the word of God but resist it. You must not only hear the word but obey it from the heart. Each person is surrounded with all the needed grace they need to meet all of God's requirements. Each person must actually receive this grace and use it for God's glory.

Heb. 4:1-2 "Let us fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them."

Heb. 4:11 "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

Heb. 2:1 "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

Christ has opened the door for each person to experience the fullness of God. He has provided everything we need to escape the corruption in word. We can receive God's divine nature and truly be holy and perfect as God requires. Through Christ we can conquer and overcome any sin. Through Christ we can do all things. We can truly fulfill all the requirements of the law so that when God looks at us he sees true actual obedience without some blood stained glasses.

I know many people who claim to have legal righteousness and holiness without having the actual experience. This means they believe that God accepts them as holy for what Christ did on the cross. This is pure deception. Christ did not hand out legal holiness. The truth is very simple; Christ only made it possible for us to experience true holiness and righteousness through His death on the cross. Each person must take God's word and make it profit them by mixing it with true faith. The problem is, many people think they believe God's word but their experience proves otherwise. True faith always will prove itself in true works.

A person is deceived if he says he believes the gospel but continues to fail to fulfill all the requirements of the law. This person may think that he believes, but if he really did believe, then he would experience it. Many people think that God's grace will somehow overlook the fact that they sin every day in thought, word and deed. God's grace does not cover up sin. The righteousness of Christ is not something that is pasted over a person's disobedience.

True grace does not overlook sin; it gives a person the power to overcome sin. If a person truly believes, they will fulfill the law in actual experience. If you continue to fail to keep the law, the only conclusion is that you have not mixed faith with the word to achieve the result. If this is you, stop now and admit the real truth that your so called faith is in vain and you have yet to really obey and follow Christ.

The grace of God gives the person who receives it pure motives and the power to truly be holy. If you truly have God's grace then you will keep the law. Either a person is actually

holy in their thoughts, words and deeds or they are not. Do not be deceived, if you are not truly experiencing holiness and righteousness then you are not. It really does not matter what biblical facts you know. Your life speaks for you. What does your life say about you?

One reason why Christ cursed the fig tree is because it had no figs. (Matt. 21:19). The tree had many leaves and from a distance appeared to bear fruit. When Christ found no fruit on it, he cursed it. This was a symbolic act. The leaves represented religious activity. There are many people that appear to have healthy spiritual lives who on closer inspection bear no true spiritual fruit.

Christ said in John 15:4-6 "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Christ expects the Christian to show the fruit of the Spirit that the Bible says is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23). Abiding in Christ and bearing fruit is a command of Christ. Either you abide in Christ or you do not. Either you bear true fruit or you do not. It is obvious that if you do not bear fruit then you do not abide in Christ.

Luke 6:44-46 "For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. And why call you me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

If you are dishonest in a small thing then you are totally wicked. If you stole a penny your sin would be as bad as if you stole one million dollars. If an employee lied on his time card it would only reveal that he could not be trusted in anything. Remember it is the heart that decides all good and evil. Any person who sins knowingly, only reveals an evil and wicked heart. Is your heart full of love for God as the scripture requires?

Matt. 22:36-39 "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love your neighbor as Yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Mark 12:30 "And you shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. The second is you shalt love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandments greater than these."

Luke 10:27 "You shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

The word used to describe the kind of love that God has and requires is the word "agape" in Greek. This word means total unselfish love. This love is always concerned with the interests of others. It is translated to the word love often in the bible. This is not the love that a husband may have for his wife. Neither is it the love a mother may have for her children. A married couple may truly love each other and their children but still not have the love that God requires. Everyone must repent of their total selfishness to be born again.

God's requirement is to love Him totally. Either a person totally loves and lives for God or he loves himself and lives to bring himself pleasure. There is no other choice possible.

When a person truly loves God they will keep all the commandments. John 14:15, 21a, 24. "If you love me, keep my commands. The person that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me. The person who does not keep my sayings, loves me not."

Keeping the commands is a simple test to see if you really love God. If you do not fulfill and keep God's law, then you do not love him. If you think that you love Christ but fail to keep all His commands then you are deceived. Keeping the commands is the only real evidence and proof that a person truly loves Him.

Some characteristics of a true believer are:

1. He has a pure love to God and others. If any person has resentment or bitterness toward anyone he does not love them. If any person says he loves God but does not love someone that he can see, he is a liar and the truth is not in him. See I John 5:1-2 and I John 4:20.
2. He does not practice sin but does practice righteousness. See I John 3:4-10 and I John 2:29.
3. He keeps all the commandments. The believer may commit an occasional sin, but no form of sin can be habitual. Under the grace of God the believer cannot be the slave of sin. No desire, appetite, lust or temptation of any kind can have dominion over him. See Romans 6:14.
4. He is a doer of the Word. See James 1:22.
5. He overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil. See I John 5:4.

Now is the time for total honesty. Do you really fulfill all the requirements of the Law. Do you really obey God or just call yourself a Christian and accomplish your own private agenda? Are you really holy and practice righteousness? Do you really have Christ

Himself really living within you giving you the power to slay all sin? Do you just have a set of biblical facts that offer no help in showing forth the true character of God? Does your life show the fruit of the Spirit or just leaves?

Study questions.

1. What determines a person's moral character?
2. What is indwelling sin?
3. What is true Christianity?
4. What is repentance?
5. Does Christ accept anyone who calls Him lord? Why?
6. Does knowing and believing biblical facts save a person? Why?
7. Can Christ be a person's savior without having Him as Lord? Why?
8. What are the requirements for salvation?
9. Why did Christ refuse to give salvation to the man who asked for eternal life?
10. Does Christ accept every person who repeats a sinners pray? Why?
11. What does Christ demand for a person to do if he really wants Him? Why?
12. Why did Christ die on the cross?
13. What is a person's only guarantee of heaven? Why?
14. Why did most of the people that God brought from Egypt fail?
15. What must you do so that you do not follow their example?
16. Is it possible for God to declare you holy without any actual experience?
17. Does the grace of God overlook sin? Why?
18. What is one purpose for grace?
19. Why did Christ curse the fig tree?
20. What is the only true test that shows if you truly love God?

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