

Seoul Grace Community

What Is Sin? The "If Only..." Sin

Numbers 11:1-20

October 2, 2016

1. Introduction

- a. The free slaves are in the desert and they begin to have an appetite for something other than the grace God was showing them by providing manna for them to survive on ("strong craving" or "lusting" v. 4)
- b. Sin: We are looking at the problem of the human race. What's wrong with us?
 - i. Why do we treat each other the way we do?
 - ii. We know we ought to love others, not hurt them, stay honest, etc.
 - iii. And we do not do this. What's wrong with us?
 - iv. The bible says we are slaves to sin.
 1. There is a power to sin—it's not simply breaking rules—sin is destructive in its nature.
 2. In this story, sin is threatening to tear apart the very fabric of the community (the people turn against God, Moses turns against the people, etc.)
- c. The people of God had started to commit perhaps the most prevalent sin—"If only..." whereby they crave something other than God for fulfillment and yet will continually be disappointed by it (cf. v. 20)

2. The "If Only" Sin

- a. The Israelites say that they had it better being slaves in Egypt (v.4-6)
 - i. They wish for "If only..." to make them content (v. 4)
 - ii. They honestly convinced themselves of the good things back in Egypt and forgot the bad stuff (enslavement, harsh treatment, etc).
 - iii. They were operating out of a slave mentality and unable to appreciate the good they knew in their heart of hearts because the passion for something other than God had crept into their hearts
 - iv. Paul knew this personally for him (see Romans 7:14-20)—he was aware of his slavery to keep wishing "If only..."
 - v. The people complain because they're enslaved to their base desire for self-fulfillment
 1. This is an addiction for self-pleasure—every sin is an addiction of sorts because it threatens to take the place of God in our lives where we find ultimate rest, comfort and security.
 2. It brings in a power that operates like addiction.
 3. God says they will eat the quail until it comes out of their noses. (v. 20) as to say that the very thing they crave it will never be enough.
 - a. They will try to meet their distress with an agent because the agent promises help.
 - b. This is true for any addiction. The agent offers us the idea of control.
 - c. But it only creates tolerance whereby we will need more and more of it.
- b. This applies to anything we use to comfort ourselves deep down. "If Only..."
 - i. Not just escaping for a bit but always needing to escape.
 - ii. We think we are gaining freedom but we are becoming enslaved while we don't realize it.
 - iii. Look at the people in this story. They're distorting reality. They crave the past comforts rather than God as their comfort.
- c. "If only..." sin that is addictive also destroys relationships.
 - i. Moses is tired of carrying them (v. 12-15)
 - ii. He can't stand the cycle of co-dependency and he wants to break the relationship.

- iii. This is what happens to friends in your life who tire of seeing the pattern of self-deception and destruction.
- d. What is it that, when you get it, you want more but it increasingly doesn't have the compounding positive effect on you? Reputation? Comfort? Security?
 - i. "If only..." How do you finish the sentence?

3. The "If Only..." Sacrifice

- a. How do you get out of this type of sin? By praying a new type of "If only..."—finding the true source of your rest and happiness
 - i. God intervenes first (v. 18-20)
 - ii. You will need a community of people or someone who has the access to enter in and tell you what the real problem is. Someone has to come in and point out your slavery.
 - iii. They thought they were just asking for meat but God says they have another and more dangerous problem.
- b. How do you lose your "If Only..." and find a new, better one?
 - i. Well, what was Jesus' "If Only..."? What did he pray for and long for? (John 17:20-26)
 - ii. Jesus prays for a relationship—he pleads with God to bring us into the eternal love relationship He and God have experienced—he wants us to join the heavenly party!
 - iii. His "if only" was you and me!! As if to say "If only I could have them back in my arms forever"
 - iv. Moses sees the "If only..." sin of the people and said he would rather die than bear this burden.
 - 1. But there was one who looks at your and my "If only..." sin and actually DOES die for it—to complete us and fulfill us in a way that our "If only..." could never do
 - 2. Hebrews 3:3-6 connects Moses to Jesus—Jesus was the greater Moses!
 - 3. There was one who died to take the burden.
 - a. He didn't die despite our slavery. He died to take on that slavery head on.
 - b. This is why the gospel isn't an intellectual exercise, but a power—every day to combat the "If Only..." in our life
 - c. "Love is an irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired." — Robert Frost
 - i. Do you know that all your irresistible desires will never irresistibly desire you?
 - ii. But He did and showed is by giving his life—You are irresistibly desired—that's true love
- c. Jesus is the only "If Only..." that will give us true rest. Rest on him, his life, death and resurrection for you to free you from your "If Only..." sin and stop craving other sources of fulfillment.
- d. Practically speaking, the gospel message—that while you and I are constantly craving an "If only..." type of fulfillment and turning from God, he sends Jesus to complete His own "If only..." to have us back in his arms and saved—leads us to start praying differently, pursuing different goals, finding peace and comfort in our lives despite circumstances or achievements.
- e. You begin to pray "God, if only I can know the irresistible love you have for me shown through your Son's death and resurrection for me" rather than all the other "If only..." requests we tend to make in our lives as conditions for happiness.