

I am Broken

1 Timothy 1:12-17

INTRODUCTION

- A. A newspaper editorial once asked the question, "What's wrong with the world?" G. K. Chesterton wrote in a two-word reply: "I am."
1. Could truer words ever be spoken?
 - a. If there is a problem in our family, who is to blame? We're ready to throw words or accusations, but is it not true that we ourselves bear some of the blame.
 - b. What problems do we have as a congregation?
 - 1) Do we reach out with the Gospel of Jesus as we ought? Do we teach our children as faithful as we know we should? Do we care for the needy as God would have us?
 - 2) It's easy to point the blame: "It's the elders fault; it's the preacher's fault."
 - 3) Yet, again, is it not true that we all bear some responsibility.
 2. But, it's very, very hard to admit responsibility.
 - a. Those two little words-"I'm sorry"-are so difficult to say.
 - b. I know those words are so difficult to say, because we all have a hard time with them.
 - 1) How many times do we argue with our spouses & have such a hard time saying those simple words?
 - 2) How many times do we have a good friend who blows up on us, but he or she has such a hard time saying those words?
- B. There are some words which are even more difficult for us to say than, "I'm sorry." Those words: "I have sinned."
1. You see: "I'm sorry" simply admits that we made a mistake; "I've sinned" indicates that we have violated a holy God.
 - a. It's not terribly uncommon for me to dial my mom on my cell phone when I mean to call Tammy.
 - 1) What often happens is that I'm with the boys & they say something about "Mom."
 - 2) I see "Mom" on my cell phone address book & I dial it.
 - 3) Mom picks up, she can tell by my voice that I'm surprised she answered, and I will say, "Mom, I'm sorry; I meant to call Tammy."
 - b. Did I sin? Absolutely not! Did I make a mistake? Absolutely.
 2. There are, however, several characters in Scripture who did much more than simply make a mistake; they sinned.
 - a. The first time we find the words "I have sinned" in Scripture is right after the plague of hail. Pharaoh says to Moses & Aaron, "This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong" (Ex 9:27).
 - b. After Nathan confronts David over his sin with Bathsheba, the king says, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Sm 12:13).
 - c. When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned to die, he brought his silver back to the chief priest and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Mt 27:3).
- C. In tonight's text, Paul does not say the words "I have sinned."
1. READ TEXT.
 2. No, Paul, in his own words, was not simply a sinner-he was the foremost of sinners.
 3. As the foremost of sinners we find that Paul was broken. As we see Paul as a broken man, we see him as A DISGUSTING MAN, A DOMINANT MAN; & A DELIVERED MAN.

PAUL WAS A DISGUSTING MAN, v 13

- A. Paul says that he was formerly a blasphemer.
 - 1. We typically think of blasphemy as speaking against God.
 - a. The Gr term itself simply means to “speak evil of” or “speak against.”
 - b. It is used in the NT to describe speaking against people as well as God.
 - 1) “Why not do evil that good may come?-as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just” (Rm 3:8). “Slanderously charge” is blaspheme.
 - 2) “With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you” (1 Pt 4:4). “Malign” is blaspheme.
 - 2. Why is it important to note that people can be blasphemed?
 - a. Because it seems best to understand the blasphemy here as directed toward Christians rather than God.
 - 1) The other two negative attributes Paul mentions here-persecution & insolence-apply to the church far more easily than to God.
 - 2) We also read an example of Paul’s blasphemy against the church.
 - b. We read of that blasphemy in Acts 9:1-2: “But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1-2).
- B. Paul was formerly a persecutor.
 - 1. Saul of Tarsus was a violent persecutor of the church.
 - a. About the martyrdom of Stephen we read, “They cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul” (Acts 7:58).
 - b. “Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3).
 - 2. Not only does Luke tell of how violently Saul ravaged the church, but Paul tells of it himself.
 - a. To the churches of Galatia, Paul describes his former life with these words: “You have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers” (Gal 1:13-14).
 - b. To the Philippians, Paul describes himself like this: “If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless” (Phil 3:4-6).
- C. Paul also describes himself as an “insolent opponent.”
 - 1. The Greek term for “insolent opponent” refers to being a violent person.
 - a. It was used in Greek to refer to wild animals.
 - b. The idea is one who is violent, unruly.
 - 2. There is absolutely no doubt but that Paul was “insolent”-he wasn’t content simply to persecute Christians in Jerusalem, but he planned to persecute Christians in Damascus also.
- D. We have the picture in this verse of one who was absolutely disgusting.
 - 1. What is the most repulsive, disgusting thing you have ever witnessed?
 - a. In February of last year, a NYC KFC was found to have a serious rat infestation.
 - 1) The CBS affiliate went to the restaurant and found more than a dozen rats scurrying across the floor, leaping between tables and chairs. They even saw one perched on the ATM outside the restaurant.
 - 2) They saw the rats in the kitchen eating on leftovers.
 - b. The filth of that restaurant does not begin to describe the filth of sin!

2. We need to understand that sin is absolutely filthy & disgusting!
 - a. There are so many who could tell us how disgusting sin is.
 - 1) Ask David as he languishes for a week in hopes that his baby boy might live.
 - 2) Ask David's predecessor Saul how filthy sin is as he plunges his sword into his heart.
 - 3) Ask Peter as he stands there with tears running down his cheeks after he hears the rooster crow.
 - b. It would be so easy to think, "My sin isn't really that bad. I've never committed adultery; I've never squandered a kingdom God has given to me; I've never denied knowing Jesus."
 - 1) That's a really nice, smug thought, isn't it?!
 - 2) One single sin-maybe even one we'd consider no big deal-would have caused Jesus, the perfect Creator, to leave heaven to die. Sin is filthy!
3. Let us stay away from sin!

PAUL WAS A DOMINANT MAN, vv 13-15

- A. Paul here describes himself as a "dominant man," i.e., Paul was the foremost, the chief of sinners.
- B. Paul first notes that he "had acted ignorantly in unbelief."
 1. We see here that ignorance of the law is no excuse.
 2. The question has often been asked: "What about those who have never heard of Jesus?"
 - a. Paul here stands as a good example of people in that situation-Paul was lost and damned to hell even though he was ignorant.
 - b. Paul, through the Spirit, teaches us that those who have never heard of Jesus are lost.
 - 1) "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).
 - 2) "'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Rm 10:13-14).
 - a) Do you catch what Paul is saying there?
 - b) You must call on the name of the Lord in order to have salvation-BUT: if you've never believed in him, you can't call on him; & if you've never heard of him, you can't believe in him.
 - c) Thus, Paul declares that one absolutely must hear of Jesus in order to be saved.
3. A few years ago, I got a speeding ticket in Charleston-the only speeding ticket I've ever gotten.
 - a. I had eaten lunch with Tammy, crossed the over onto Bridge Street, & got a ticket right in front of the lottery headquarters.
 - b. Do you know why I got a ticket?
 - 1) The speed limit was only 25, but I did not know that; I was doing 40.
 - 2) Do you think they let me off the hook because I did not know what the speed limit was???
4. If those who do not know better are lost & damned to hell, what are we to do?
 - a. I believe that we need to be grateful that we have had an opportunity to hear & respond to the Gospel. How many of us were reared in Christian homes or married Christian spouses or had Christian friends share the Gospel with us?
 - b. I also believe we need to be committed to sharing the message of Jesus.
 - 1) That's the conclusion Paul reached; he writes in Rm 10:14-15: "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"
 - 2) That was the command of Jesus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt

28:19).

- c. Shall we commit ourselves to calling people out of their ignorance into the grace of God?
- C. Paul, in his ignorance, was the foremost of sinners-i.e., he was the dominant sinner, the biggest one.
 - 1. "Foremost" or "chief"-depending on your translation-indicates that Paul was FIRST RANK among sinners.
 - 2. Do you honestly believe that Paul was the worst sinner of all time?
 - a. What about Adam & Eve? It was they who brought all sin & heartache into the world?
 - b. What about Muhammad who has been able to beguile many people through the centuries to turn from the living God to allah?
 - c. What about Adolf Hitler who killed countless Jews? Do you believe Paul killed more Christians than Hitler did Jews?
 - 3. Here's my point: I don't believe Paul is here declaring that he was the worst sinner in the history of mankind.
 - a. I'm not so sure that you can really categorize sin. Some sins have greater consequences than others, but any single sin by any one person would have caused the death of the perfect Son of God!
 - b. Paul understood fully how great his sin was.
 - 4. We need to understand how fully great how sin is; we need to feel like the dominant sinner of all time.
 - a. "Behold, I was brought for in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 51:5).
 - 1) There has been much error taught from this passage simply because the nature of the text has been misunderstood.
 - 2) David is writing in hyperbole & expressing his emotions.
 - 3) What David says is, "I feel like I've always been a sinner; I feel as though I've never been able to do anything right."
 - 4) It's the same thing as when we say, "I just can't do anything right today."
 - 5) David isn't expressing reality, but he is expressing how he feels.
 - b. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps 51:17).
 - 1) How broken are our hearts & spirits this evening?
 - 2) Do we see ourselves as the chief of sinners, or do we see ourselves as the crème de la crème?

A DELIVERED MAN, vv 16-17

- A. Paul received mercy.
 - 1. Is that not an utterly amazing thought?
 - a. Here is one who by his own admission is a vile, vile sinner-he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent opponent.
 - b. Yet, this vile, vile sinner found redemption & mercy.
 - 2. Even the most vile sinners can find redemption & mercy in Jesus Christ.
 - a. If you examine Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, you find some amazing women mentioned there.
 - 1) Tamar was in Jesus' family tree (Mt 1:3)-Tamar covered herself as a prostitute & committed fornication with Judah in order to have children.
 - 2) Rahab is also mentioned (Mt 1:5)-Rahab was a prostitute from Jericho.
 - 3) Matthew also mentions that Solomon was the son of "the wife of Uriah" (Mt 1:6). Bathsheba, of course, was an adulteress.
 - 4) Yet, these three women are in Jesus' family tree! God was able to mend their brokenness.
 - b. Peter denied he knew who Jesus was, yet he became a great apostle.
 - c. At Pentecost, Peter declared to the Jews gathered there that they had murdered the Messiah,

yet through the Spirit, he offered the multitude mercy & grace.

3. It matters not what we have done-God is able & willing to forgive.
- B. Because Paul has been delivered, he breaks out in a doxology at the end of this passage.
1. Is that not the most natural response? If we have been forgiven of horrible sin, how can we not praise God for his great mercy?
 2. Are you praising God because of the great forgiveness he has given you?

The main ideas for this sermon were taken from my father, Randy Imel, preacher for the Meniffee Church of Christ, Frenchburg, KY.