Soul Sick

Many of you know that most of my ministry has been around high-school students. Previous to coming here I spent a total of 28 years at three different Boarding Academies. One of the yearly events, especially in the later years, was the annual CPR/First Aid training and recertification. Every year we went over the same basic information. They didn’t try to make it creative or fun; they focused on the basics – as if we didn’t know anything about it. They wanted to be sure that we didn’t lose sight of the important stuff that could end up saving someone’s life.

Today, we are beginning a three-week review of the basics of Christianity. We have been through this before but it is important. It is the foundation of Christianity. It is the stuff that everything else is built upon. Every doctrine is built on these basics. We are doing this in preparation for a series on how to share Jesus’ love with people around us based on thoughts from the book, Just Walk Across the Room.

That series will start on October 12 (3 weeks from today). The series will mean more to you if you read the book and participate in one of the small groups that is discussing it. It is available in all the local Christian book stores as well as the on-line ones. It is available as an e-book from Amazon.com. Or, you can let Calvin Millet know and he will order you one through the church that you can have for just $5 (may be slightly used). Contact him this week if you want one so it will be here on time.

Prayer/Introduction

Last Saturday evening, while many of you were enjoying the fire-pit social here at church, Pat and I were experiencing the emergency room at Midlands Hospital. I had another bout with diverticulitis. It’s not that it was so bad – it was just that my doctor’s office would not be open again until Monday and if I had waited till then, it would have gotten real bad.

For me, this is one of those conditions that doesn’t get better without some assistance, like antibiotics. If left alone, it can ultimately become life-threatening. It can be pretty painful and usually makes me feel in general like I have a bad case of the flu – in addition to the pain in my gut.

Now, I’m not sharing this to make you feel sorry for me, many of you deal with more significant pain on a daily basis than I had for a couple of days. Many of you feel worse regularly than I did for just a few days. But there are some lessons here.

One of the first things that they did for me after they had determined that my “gut” feeling was correct, they took some measures to ease the pain. It’s the first time that I have received Morphine – it does work pretty good. I was much more comfortable after getting it than before. But just treating the pain does little to fix the problem. We would think pretty poorly of a doctor who only treated the symptoms when he could fix the problem that was causing them. What would we think of a doctor who treated measles with sand paper – to get rid of the red bumps on our skin rather than dealing with illness?
More is needed. They did some tests to confirm that I did indeed have diverticulitis and then they treated the cause of the sickness – in this case, antibiotics. Without this part, the pain meds would wear off and more would be needed indefinitely.

This is very much like sin in our lives. There are the symptoms and then there is the underlying cause. All those things that we call “sins” are not really the problem; they are the results of the problem. These are the things that are addressed in various lists in the Bible. One of the most familiar is found in Galatians 5:

- It’s clear that our flesh entices us into practicing some of its most heinous acts: participating in corrupt sexual relationships, impurity, unbridled lust, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, arguing, jealousy, anger, selfishness, contentiousness, division, envy of others’ good fortune, drunkenness, drunken revelry, and other shameful vices that plague humankind. (Galatians 5:19-20, the Voice)

Other results may include depression, anxiety, and hopelessness. While all these things, these “sins” are a problem, they are not really THE PROBLEM. Any time we just focus on them – trying to fix them, making rules to manage them, judging other because of them – we will not solve anything, there will be no healing take place. It would be like just taking pain killers without addressing the cause of the pain. These are all expressions of another issue, an underlying cause, a disease that needs to be treated.

The real issue is who is in charge. THE PROBLEM is we want to be in charge of ourselves. Sin is saying “no” to God, telling Him that I can handle life on my own. It is saying that I am taking charge and will direct my own life. It is living apart from God. This leads us to all these other things, these problems that are so prevalent in our society. It can also lead to the Pharisaic attitude that Jesus condemned – that of thinking that we are better than someone else and looking down on them because they are not as “good” as we are. It can lead to using religion as a means to manipulate and control others.

The Bible tells us that we are all in the same boat. All of us are infected with this disease called sin. In Romans Paul says:

- “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:10-12, NIV)

- All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (Isaiah 64:5-6, NIV)

- Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil. (Jeremiah 13:23, NIV)

So what are we to do? What is one of the most common good bye phrases we use as we are leaving someone who is sick? “Get Well!” From the perspective of someone who is sick, this often feels like an impossible command. And it is especially true that we cannot get well by pretending to be well.
Wellness only happens through processes that we don’t completely understand or control. Wellness happens when we make choices to take the medications we need and adjust our lifestyle (diet, rest, exercise, etc.) to give our bodies what they need to recover. There are some conditions we may find ourselves in where it makes very little difference what we do, the disease is incurable – in these cases a miracle is needed.

This is very much like sin in our lives. It is not something that we can just up and get rid of. It requires outside assistance. Sin is a terminal condition that requires a miracle. This miracle is Jesus. In the book of Romans, Paul puts it this way:

*The payoff for a life of sin is death, but God is offering us a free gift—eternal life through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, the Liberating King.* (Romans 6:23, the Voice)

This is the reason He came to this earth to live and die. He lived to show us what a life submitted to God looks like in our broken world. He died, taking on Himself the consequences of our sin. And, He now offers to give us His life.

Healing from sin begins when we say to God: “Please come and take control of my life. I have made a mess of it and I am giving up to You!” Healing continues as we daily spend time with Him by listening to what He tells us in His word, the Bible, and sharing with Him every part of our lives through prayer. It continues as day by day we say “yes” to God as He points out things He wants us to do and people He wants us to love.

**Video – Skit Guys, “God’s Chisel” (to see a You Tube version, [click here](#))**

**Conclusion/Appeal**

To sum this up, I would like to read a few verses:

*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* (Romans 3:23-24, NIV)

*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* (1 John 2:1, NIV)

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9, NIV)

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.* (Psalm 103:11-13, TNIV)
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16, NKJV)

And these thoughts from The Desire of Ages:

Whether they know it or not, all are weary and heavy-laden. All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place ... He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders ... He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart.

... He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal ... "Come unto Me," is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer ...

Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet. (The Desire of Ages, pages 328-330)

Here on this earth Satan will always be trying to entice us to sin – to living our lives outside of God’s control. In our country, more people die from chronic, preventable disease than from any other cause. The same is true in our spiritual life – more people will be lost by chronic, unintentional separation from Jesus than from any other cause. Satan doesn’t tempt us with choosing him; he simply tempts us to put off submitting to Jesus. He knows that if we are not connected to God, we will be lost in the end.

Our only salvation and safety is to deliberately choose to submit our lives to God and then live our life focused on Him. Have you done this? If not, don’t put it off – don’t put it off!

Closing Song/Benediction