

The Mind of Christ pt. 4
There is No Bondage
Addiction

I. Introduction

- A. Today we will wrap up our study of mental health issues. I have had more calls, texts, and conversations about this sermon series than anything I've preached since going through the book of Revelation a couple of years ago. This tells me that these issues are very real and very present even in the church. So if you are here and you are struggling with mental health issues, I want you to know that there is hope in Jesus and that you are not alone. If you are here and you are mentally healthy, you need to know that there are hurting people around you that need your love, prayers, and encouragement.
- B. Today we will examine addiction biblically. This can be challenging for a couple of reasons.
 - 1. Biblical Perspective
 - a) The Bible deals with this subject more so through principle and precept than explicit teachings.
 - 2. Personal Experience
 - a) I have battled anxiety, depression, and grief. However, I have not struggled with alcoholism or drug addiction.
 - b) "Loving someone battling active addiction, in any capacity, whether it be your spouse, child, parent, or sibling, can be one of the loneliest places to be in the world. It could be compared to grieving or mourning the person you love while they are still very much alive and unwell. Imagine the person you love slowly and painfully fading away right in front of your eyes. You can literally see the lights in their eyes become dim and by the end of it when they have totally lost themselves to their addiction, the dim has turned into complete darkness and emptiness. Loving someone going through addiction is often compared to complete destruction. Not only are they destroying their lives, but they are taking everyone down around them. If that is not bad enough, they can't even see it, and if they do see it, they do not care. They do not care about the damages they are causing. They do not care about the physical, mental, emotional, financial, and spiritual damage they are putting on everyone around them. They are thinking about themselves and their next 'fix.'"

II. The Definition

- A. "An addiction is any thinking or behavior that is habitual, repetitious, and very difficult or impossible to control regardless of the consequences. Usually, the addiction brings short-term pleasure, but there are long-term consequences in terms of one's health, relationships, psychological well-being, and spirituality. [...] In most cases, addictions are progressive conditions that slowly exert more and more power and control." (*Christians Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, pg. 682)
- B. Based on this definition anything can be an addiction at some level. If we are honest we are all addicted to something. For example, we could be addicted to junk food, entertainment such as t.v. or video games, social media, cigarettes, and even work. Even things that are, in it of themselves, good become dangerous addictions when they control us and bring about negative consequences on our lives.

- C. Having said that, not all addictions have the same severity of explicit consequences. Being addicted to Oreos can cause you health problems and other issues but it is likely going to be less devastating than being addicted to alcohol or drugs. With that in mind, I will focus our attention mostly on addictions such as alcoholism and drug abuse.
- D. Before we dive into this I want to tell you my personal convictions about alcohol.
 - 1. The Bible never condemns drinking in it of itself.
 - a) In fact, there are places in the Bible that show that alcohol is not inherently sinful:
 - (1) Jesus turning water to wine
 - (2) Paul telling Timothy to have some wine for his stomach issues.
 - 2. However, we will see that the Bible does condemn drunkenness.
 - 3. Additionally, the Bible has many warnings about the dangers of alcohol.
 - 4. So while it may not be inherently sinful to drink alcohol in any circumstance, we should be very careful with it. My personal conviction is that drinking alcohol is not worth sacrificing my reputation and ministry over so I simply abstain from it altogether. I'll leave you to your own convictions under a Christian's liberty.
 - 5. If you cannot drink without getting drunk or have a temptation for alcoholism, you should abstain from alcohol altogether.
- E. Drug abuse is different as it is illegal and harmful. Though the Bible does not deal with drug use explicitly, believe it or not there are biblical passages that inform us about drugs. Anytime you see the word "sorcery" in the Bible it is actually the Greek word from which we derive "pharmaceuticals." Witches in the ancient world often used hallucinogenic drugs in their 'magical activities.'

III. The Demonstration

- A. Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. (Genesis 9:20 - 21)
 - 1. Noah's drunkenness leads to curses being brought down on part of his family. In the same way, addiction does not only affect the addict. Addiction's consequences trickle down to those who love the addict.
- B. In 1 Samuel 25 we are introduced to a man named Nabal and his wife, Abigail. Abigail is "intelligent and beautiful" and ends up married to King David. Nabal, on the other hand is described as "harsh and evil in his dealings." David's soldiers had protected Nabal's workers in the fields and David asked him for some food and other necessities. Nabal refused to aid David and insulted the king. David was angered by this insult and planned to kill Nabal and all of the other men in his family and servants. Abigail quickly defuses the situation.
 - 1. Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light. But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone. About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died. (1 Samuel 25:36 - 27)
 - 2. A couple of insights can be seen about addiction in this story:
 - a) Nabal is oblivious to the danger that he is in.
 - b) Nabal is protected by his godly wife.
 - c) Nabal is put to death because of his foolishness.
- C. Solomon wrote a lot of proverbs about drinking and drunkenness.

1. Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1)
- D. And He said, "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living." (Luke 15:11 - 13)
1. Here we see the famous parable of the prodigal son. Even though addiction is not explicitly mentioned it is implied here. The prodigal son demanded his father give him his inheritance, which is basically to say that he told his father he was worth more to him dead than alive. When he receives the money, he "went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living."
 - a) That phrase "loose living" comes from the Greek word 'asótōs (akin to asōtos, "a prodigal") – extravagantly wasteful because of "loose living," i.e. a debauched, lifestyle'
 - b) Since most of us only ever have heard the word 'prodigal' in the context of this parable, we often assume that it means wayward or rebellious. 'Prodigal' actually means "extravagant, wasteful, or lavish." This Greek word implies a "debauched lifestyle."
 - (1) The prodigal son is prodigal not because he left his father but because he wasted his money and life with useless and harmful things.
 - c) Though the Bible does not explicitly mention alcohol or drugs in this parable, it is implied in the word for loose living. The prodigal son wastes his money partying.
 - 2.
- E. "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. (Luke 15:14 - 16)
1. Here we see where addiction leads to: poverty and shame. The prodigal son has wasted all of his money partying. Strangely all of his new friends abandon him once his money is gone. He's left with nothing.
 2. As Gentile believers we do not understand the significance of him working at a pig farm.
 - a) Pigs are ceremonially unclean in the Law. Jews hate pigs as the most despicable things on earth. So the prodigal son is not in Israel any more. They don't have pig farms. We saw earlier he's in a "distant country." He's far away from where he is supposed to be.
 - b) Not only that, he is eating alongside of them. This would have been scandalous in Jesus' day. This picture would be equivalent to someone eating out of a septic tank in our culture.
 3. No one was giving anything to him. What a sad turn of events. He lived a good and comfortable life with his father where he had everything he could desire. Then his father gave him everything in his inheritance. Now he's squandered it all and no one gives him anything. I've seen this story many times dealing with addicts.

- F. But when he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.’ So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:17 - 24)

IV. The Defense

A. Bondservant

1. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:11 - 23)

a) Dead to sin

- (1) Paul says we should consider ourselves ‘dead to sin.’
- (2) How I wish that this meant that a believer was incapable of sinning. The Bible authors often use the term “dead” idiomatically to mean “far from, rebellious against, or hostile towards.”
 - (a) We saw this a moment ago in the parable of the prodigal son. The father said, “this son of mine was dead and has come to life again;” The prodigal son wasn’t literally dead but he was wayward, rebellious, and sinful.
 - (b) Paul says we should be rebellious against sin, we should hate sin, we should be removed from sin. That’s what “dead to sin” means.

(c) “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness.”

b) Slaves to Righteousness

(1) Paul teaches us that we are all slaves to something. We are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness, slaves to Jesus.

(a) Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

(2) Paul considered himself to be a “doulos” a slave to the Lord Jesus.

(3) For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

(a) “Every believer should be serious about following the Lord, [this is true of those in addiction recovery]. When a person is serious about the Lord, then one is serious about recovery. What brings this longing to be free from addiction? A life transformed by Jesus. We must not forget that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit is our foundation, source, and strength.”

(b) “Heal the mind through the word.”

B. Boundaries

1. Boundaries for the addict

a) Root Causes

(1) Addictions are usually coping mechanisms for deeper issues. If we only focus on the external factors such as addiction we likely won't make much progress. We must go down deeper and try to unearth the root causes.

(2) The root cause of any sin is found in our relationship with Christ. If we are not content in Christ we will seek to find fulfillment somewhere else. If we do not run to Jesus in tough times we will run somewhere else.

b) Temptations

(1) In the sermon on the mount, Jesus uses provoking and radical language to help us understand the danger of sin. He tells us that if our eye causes us to sin we should gouge it out or if our hand causes us to sin we should cut it off. This is metaphorical but the point is that sometimes we need to remove things from our lives that cause us to sin.

(2) If you are an addict there are some places you just cannot go. There are people you just can't hang out with. There are things you just can't entertain. Others may but you cannot.

2. Boundaries to the addict

a) Briefly, if someone you love is battling addiction we must make the hard decision to not enable their addiction. We must establish healthy boundaries with an addict. We cannot bankroll or otherwise enable their addiction. That is not the loving thing to do.

C. Brothers

1. Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)
2. Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags. (Proverbs 23:20 - 21)
3. He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. (Proverbs 13:20)

D. Busyness

1. It is said that ‘idle hands are the devil’s plaything.’ This is especially true of people who struggle with addiction.
2. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Galatians 6:7 - 10)
 - a) “We must have structure and not be idle. Structure yourself with time with the Lord, work, serving the church and community, house projects, being active, time with family, etc.”
 - b) “Something that was so engraved in your life is gone. Fill the void with Christ and things that will bring Him the glory, such as walking with Him, commitment, mindfulness, structure, and a support system.”

V. Conclusion and Application