

What do little sins grow up to be?

Rev. John Belden

I have a friend who was a missionary in Uganda. Once, while he was preaching to a group, a huge king cobra slithered behind him through the hut. At the time, he didn't understand why their expressions suddenly changed. Having found out later, he took advantage of this event to illustrate sin in the Christian life.

You see, Ugandans (like most Africans) hate snakes. Many die from snakebites. Parents lose their children to snakes. Whenever they have the opportunity, they kill snakes, especially the little ones. To some this might seem extreme. Why kill the little snakes?

There are two reasons. First, the baby cobra's bite is more potent than an adult's. That makes them at least as dangerous, perhaps more so since they are not seen as dangerous. After all they're just little fellows.

The other reason is that little snakes grow up to be big snakes. Big snakes are harder to kill and they breed more snakes. The logic is obvious. Kill the little snakes before they grow up to be big snakes.

This gave my friend a powerful illustration for how Christians ought to put sins to death immediately. Too often we have an unhealthy attitude when it comes to "little sins." We see them as harmless. Since they are not as dangerous, it won't hurt to let them hang around, even make them pets. Go ahead and linger a while at the magazine section. Don't worry about the immorality in that movie. Surely little white lies won't hurt anyone. Occasional seething with anger feels good. Indulge it. You can always kill it when it gets bigger.

Christians need to realize this is how sin deceives us. It starts by making modest proposals. It presents itself as a harmless indulgence, posing no immediate danger. This was the case with King David in his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). It all began with lust. The consequences of this "little sin" were enormous.

Imagine if David's initial temptation to look at Bathsheba had revealed its final goal by saying something like this: "David, my plan is to begin by getting you to

lust after this woman, then you will commit adultery with her, get her pregnant, murder her husband to cover it up, resulting in the death of the child. This will sow the seeds of rebellion in your own children as they watch you, bring untold misery on your household, and ultimately tear the kingdom apart." Knowing this, do you think David would have said, "Surely one more look won't hurt"?

Every sin has the seeds of death in it (James 1:13-16). Each "little sin" has the same goal. It wants to grow up to be a big sin. That is why Peter warns us to abstain from "fleshly lusts." Even at this seemingly harmless stage, they "war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11). As a Christian, your soul is like a walled city under attack by an enemy outside (I Peter 5:8). To make matters worse, your lust is a traitor within the walls who wants to open the gate and let the enemy in.

The nature of sin does not change simply because we become Christians. God still hates it. It's still dangerous. It's still poisonous. It still bites!

That is why Paul tells us to "make no provision" for it (Rom. 13:14), and to put it to death immediately (Rom. 8:13). Strike at its first rising in your soul. Pluck it out while it is tender and its root system has not taken hold in your heart.

What's the moral of the story? Kill the little sins before they grow up to be big sins. Kill the lust before it grows up to adultery. Kill the anger before it grows up to murder. Kill the desires before they grow up to addiction. Don't wait till they become big sins. They're much harder to kill then. They will breed more sins. They're capable of bringing greater misery and grief to you and those you love. And they bring untold reproach upon the name of Christ. So don't let little sins grow up to be big sins.

Note: All you sin-bitten sinners come to Christ for healing John 3:14-15

John Belden is the pastor of Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church in Neon,
Kentucky. For more information, please visit our web site at
<http://www.neonrpc.org>.