

One of the least pleasant jobs that I had to do in my younger days was to weed my mother's flower garden. Many of the weeds had an extensive root structure that was very difficult to persuade out of the ground. I found that it was much easier, on the short term, to just pull the tops of the weeds off. As long as nothing showed above the ground, I felt that I was all right. I soon discovered, however, that it wasn't long before I had to weed the garden again, for the root systems that I had left had simply grown new leaves.

I would like to relate tonight a similar problem in our spiritual lives. Up until just recently I seem to remember that the emphasis on sin in my life concerned the following attitude: Lord, forgive the sins that I have committed and help me to eliminate them from my life. But I began thinking about the real nature of sin, and asked myself the question: When did you last commit a sin? Or, list the sins you have committed this week. I realized that there was something in my life that made this question totally absurd: What I would like to call my 'sinful nature.' Now I'm not talking about original sin or something like that: I'm talking about a general failure on my part to be what God really wants me to be, for failing to be a companion to him. I'm talking about selfish attitudes that are fighting for control in my life that make it ridiculous for me to think that any time period goes by when I am actually sinless, or perfect.

The 'sins' we commit are like discrete points on a graph, while our 'sinful nature' is like a continuous curve which lies underneath. It's hard to describe to the non-mathematically minded what I mean. But if your husband or wife has ever reminded you of the last time you showed your love, you know the difference between individual acts of love and a continuous loving nature.

I think that we concentrated on mainly and regret mostly the 'sins' we commit, not our 'sinful nature.' But it is our sinful nature that is the cause, or the root of our whole problem. We eliminate the super structure of sin, and it's just like pulling the tops off of the weeds. The root system still exists underneath the soil. We must work to destroy the roots as well. It's like trying to clean up a river by picking out only the scum and dead fish, while the water still has poisonous chemicals in it. What is the more dangerous to our health?

Now I want to make it perfectly clear that God, through Christ, forgives all of our sinfulness. I am trying to show what our viewpoint is like. We must realize what the real problem is, and act on it!