When we get frustrated, most of us have a routine in which we like to engage to help us relax. Some people like to clean. When my wife, Shannon was alive, she liked to make bread so she could punch it. As for me, I like to pull weeds; the more difficult, the better. (And, no, I am not volunteering to come to anyone’s house to relieve my frustrations in their yard. I have plenty of undesirable plants here!) Years ago I noticed a parallel between pulling weeds from the ground and removing sinful habits from our lives. Please follow along as I draw out this analogy.

Both weed pulling and removing sinful habits involve personal effort. Granted, you could pay someone to do your yard work, but for the sake of argument, let’s say that you are committed to taking care of your property yourself. The weed removal fairies are not going to come and clean up for you. If it’s going to get done, it will have to be done by you. The same is true with sinful habits. You cannot even begin to hire anyone to rid your heart and mind of those things. You have to take that action on your own. II Corinthians 5:10 reads, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Each of us is responsible for our own actions. In Colossians 3:5ff, Paul listed a number of sins that Christians are to “mortify” (put to death”) and “put off.” Both “mortify” and “put off” are in the imperative, meaning that it is up to each of us to get these out of our lives. If I’m going to rid these evil thoughts and deeds from my life, I will have to do it.

Whether pulling weeds or ridding ourselves of sinful thoughts and deeds, we must get to the root if we are going to rid ourselves of these undesirables. Here are a few facts about weeds and their roots. First, the roots are a weed’s foundation. Without roots, the plant will shrivel up and die. That being said, if you go to pull a weed and only grab the top, thus leaving the roots, you will permit any nutrients to get closer to the roots more quickly and allow them to grow more heartily. In other words, leave the roots and the weed comes back stronger and perhaps even greater in number. Secondly, pulling out only the part of the weed that you can see is deceiving. In so doing you have only temporarily removed an eyesore. You have not gained any long-term benefit. You’ll have to keep pulling that weed until you decide to get into the ground and take it out by its roots. Thirdly, some weed roots get entrenched more deeply and quickly than others. There’s even some deception involved with that. You might grab a twelve inch weed and pull it up, roots and all, with ease. On the other hand, you might grab a weed that hugs the ground and find yourself coming up with all leaves and no root. You can’t judge a weed by its appearance. You have to assume that every one of them will need your uttermost effort in order to eliminate them.

Now let’s make application of the previous paragraph. Sin is a matter of the heart. The Lord said through Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Solomon wrote, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23). The heart, then, is our foundation. We must not allow sin to root itself in our hearts. David sang, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11). God’s Word can serve as a barrier against the weeds of sin if we will study it and apply it. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day thought that they only needed to cleanse their bodies in order to be pure before God. Jesus explained that they needed to clean up their hearts (Matthew 15:10-20). Paul wrote that there needs to be an inner transformation in our lives (Romans 12:1-2). Sinful habits must be uprooted. We can’t just toss up a hasty prayer for forgiveness and strength every now and then and hope that will do the trick. We must focus and dig deep in an effort to find out why we engage in those sins, what situations might lead us toward those sins and how we can stop that unacceptable behavior and replace it with behavior that is pleasing to God. All sin should be treated seriously for all sin separates from God (Isaiah 59:1,2). There are some with which we might have particular difficulties while there are others that we think wouldn’t really be a problem for us. All sin should be treated with the utmost gravity and the roots of each should be diligently dug out of our hearts. Paul exhorted, "Neither give place to the devil." (Ephesians 4:27). We can’t afford to give Satan's sinful weeds even a fragment of our hearts lest he begin setting the roots of sin therein.
Digging deep to uproot sin takes time, study, meditation, prayer and dedication. A beautiful landscape did not get that way by accident. A beautiful Christian life is no accident either.

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