

The Psychology and Methods of Sin ***-contrasted with-*** ***The Mindset and Fruits of the Spirit***

“The heart is deceitful above all things...who can know it?” (Jer 17:9)

“Dealing With the Abuser Part 2”

October 31, 2010

Sermon Text: Exodus 4

Scripture Reading: Exodus 4

Introduction

Last time we looked to the book of Nehemiah for a very clear example of how to deal with an abusive person. Nehemiah persevered in the Lord’s work. He did not leave off of it to go talk with Sanballat and Tobiah. He did not yield to *fear* which would lead him to act shamefully and even sinfully. The Lord gave him great insight into the true motives of enemy agents who were sent to him by Sanballat. **THE LORD WILL DO THE SAME FOR EACH OF US IF WE WILL TRUST HIM AND NOT FEAR.**

NOTE: EVERY real Christian whose heart is set on following Christ faithfully IS going to meet the abuser – the Sanballats and the

Tobiahs. Satan is there and he sends his emissaries. Still another reason for all of us to learn about this matter of abuse since it gives us so much insight into the schemes of the enemy which WE WILL face!

Nehemiah was truly “purpose-driven” – in a true and biblical way. His purpose was to do the work the Lord had given him to do. Nothing was to be allowed to turn him to the right or to the left. *He took action as well.* He directed watchmen to be placed, he had all the workers get battle-ready. He put trumpeters in place to call for reinforcements at the very point of an enemy attack. But EVEN THEN there were things – unknown to him at the time – that the Lord was faithful to deal with. Enemy agents among Nehemiah’s own people, hired by the enemy, hired to tell Nehemiah and the people what a great guy Tobiah really was. **ALL OF THAT CAME OUT IN THE END. THE LORD BROUGHT THOSE WICKED SCHEMES TO NOTHING AND THE WORK WAS COMPLETED IN RECORD TIME.**

NOTE: We all need to take care that we do not fall into the trap of trying to “cover” every single possible enemy strategy. If we do this, the work Christ has called us to will not get done. Our energies and resources will be consumed. There are things we must do, as Nehemiah did – that are reasonable and wise defenses against the enemy. But faith is required!! The battle is ultimately the Lord’s.

So, for example, there are many possible fronts that Satan could (and does) attack this church on. Slander. Double agents. Secret schemes. But if we ever find ourselves spending the majority of our time and resources and energy *trying to ensure that every single crack in the wall is covered, every single possible enemy strategy defended against by things we do ourselves – then what is going to happen?* **Our energy and time and resources which are to be spent on the work the Lord has given us to do will be re-channeled. The work will not get done, the wall will not be built, and the enemy will have been successful after all.** Ultimately, by faith, we leave the rest to the Lord – and isn’t that exactly what we have here –

Ephesians 6:10-18 ESV

(10) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

(11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

(13) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, **and having done all, to stand firm.**

(14) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

(15) and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

(16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

(17) and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

(18) praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep

alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Understand? We do our part. We put on the armor. We stand. But when the armor is on and the sword is picked up, we still *pray at all times*. We WATCH through PRAYER. This is FAITH in action. And the Lord handles the subterfuges, the conspiracies, the secret enemy agents, the schemes plotted in secret against Christ, and so on.

“What good is an army that only defends, but never presses forward with its assigned mission? What good is a football team that only has a defensive unit but never, ever advances the ball to the end zone? No good at all!”

And these are the important lessons that Nehemiah teaches us. *Don't spend your time negotiating with Sanballat. Take measures. Put on the armor. Keep watch. But don't be consumed by trying to defend against every single possible attack strategy of the enemy. There will be enemy agents and secret schemes that we do not and cannot even know about. But the Lord sees, the Lord Knows, and He will bring them*

to nothing. Remember Nehemiah's response to the enemy at one point –

Nehemiah 6:8-9 ESV

(8) Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind."

(9) For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

I. Dealing With A Pharaoh

Still another classic example of an abusive man on a HUGE scale is – Pharaoh in the time of Moses. Pharaoh, in the history of redemption, is a type of Satan. Just as the elect people of God were enslaved and abused by Pharaoh in Egypt, so Satan enslaves sinners with chains no human being can ever break free of. The redemption of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt is, of course, a beautiful picture of THE Passover Lamb who redeems His elect from sin and death.

Here then is Moses and the Israelites. They are slaves. Moses has been a fugitive, in exile from Pharaoh for 40 long years. He was born into slavery. God's purpose is

to redeem and free them from this bondage of abuse. And so, He comes to Moses and He calls Moses to be *the one*.

“The Lord wants His people to be FREE. Free from Satan. Free from the condemnation of sin. Free from the power of sin. Free from anyone who would enslave us and rule us through fear.”

Perhaps this is the VERY FIRST thing you need to face up to. An abuse victim needs to know and believe that because of Christ, there is freedom from sin and its effects. *There is a BETTER way to live – to really live! Christ has come so that we do not have to remain in Egypt, enslaved and abused.* Do YOU believe that? OR HAVE YOU BECOME SO ACCUSTOMED TO SLAVERY AND ABUSE THAT YOU THINK THIS IS THE NORM AND THAT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY???? [I think that there are entire families and entire churches that think the enslaved condition they are in IS NORMAL!]

Did you see Moses’ hesitation and even opposition to this great redemption? First, listen to God’s promise of redemption –

Exodus 3:16-22 ESV

(16) Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt,

(17) and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey."

(18) And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

(19) But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.

(20) So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.

(21) And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty,

(22) but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

God's stated and plain intent is that His people be FREE from Satan, from death and hell and condemnation and accusation. This is all an image of the redemption of Jesus Christ through His perfect life and His cross and resurrection. *If you are here this morning and you do not know Christ, then the enslaved, hard, oppressive condition of the Israelites in Egypt under Pharaoh is YOUR condition.*

"So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go."

Moses hesitates. Moses fears. Moses is just like us. Moses is like a victim of abuse who is offered the freedom that Christ brings. He just can't see it happening. The abuser is SO powerful. And Moses is SO weak. *Who am I?*

Exodus 4:1 ESV

(1) Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"

Exodus 4:10 ESV

(10) But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

Exodus 4:12-14 ESV

(12) Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

(13) But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

(14) Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart."

Moses is just like us, right? But the Lord meets each one of his objections, empowers him, and finally – with some righteous and chastising anger as of a Father – He compels Moses to go.

NOTE: I do not know the details of every abuse victim's situation. HOW precisely God will lead in each case as to how to confront the abuser is going to vary. A woman, for instance, who is being abused by a dangerous, violent man who is very capable of killing her, is probably not going to be called to march right up to him and confront him and announce she is leaving and isn't going to take it anymore. But we do know that in EVERY case, God wants her free! He leads her in Christ out of Egypt. That may not mean in every case actually leaving a marriage or leaving the house. But it does mean *freedom*.

The Battle is Going to be A Battle

Now, we know how the thing went with Moses. *It looked bad at first attempt!* Moses confronts Pharaoh – *Thus says the Lord...Let My people go!* But Pharaoh does not. He mocks God. And he *increases the burden on the people so that their lot appears to be worse than before. Now they have to get their own straw and their taskmasters beat them even more.* And then they come to Moses –

Exodus 5:20-23 ESV (20) They met Moses and Aaron, who were

waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh;

(21) and they said to them, "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

(22) Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?"

(23) For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all."

Man! What a low point!! This is NOT how Moses thought it was going to go down! Things look REALLY dismal.

NOTE: If you are trying to help a victim of abuse get free, do not be surprised if you experience something similar to what Moses did. She may turn on you and blame you when things don't happen as easily as she might have thought. Warn her ahead of time! Don't tell her "Hey, we'll just pack up your things and you can leave and start a new life and that will be that." No. It isn't going to be that simple. But Christ's people WILL make it out of Egypt.

II. The Path to Freedom – See Your Bondage and Admit it

Just as the Israelites had to admit that they were slaves in Egypt and in great need of rescue and redemption, so it is with the sinner. Man the sinner needs to SEE the plight he is in. Condemned. Dead. A slave of the devil. Unable to do anything to get free. The prodigal son had to “come to his senses” and see that he was in a pig pen before he was ever going to return to his father.

When it comes to this matter of abuse, something very similar is necessary. Both for the victim AND for us – for people who might be friends or relatives of the victim. Beverly Engle puts it this way –

“Step One: Admit to yourself that you are being emotionally abused and acknowledge the damage you’ve experienced because of it.”

[The Emotionally Abusive Relationship, John Wiley & Sons, 2002]

Why is this so vital? Because, as we have seen, the abusive person is a master of façade and disguise, of brain-washing and blaming his victim. Of playing with her perceptions and self-confidence to trust them. As a result, blindness to and denial of abuse is typical.

Darkness and confusion are tactics of the devil. So that perhaps this first step is the most crucial AND the most difficult! *To see it! To begin to grasp just exactly what is going on!*

Let’s illustrate the difficulty by returning once more to the Israelites under Moses. They had been gloriously redeemed. The Exodus had been effected. Pharaoh had been totally humiliated and his army destroyed. The people had seen the might and power of God. They were fed by Him every day right there in the wilderness. *And yet in spite of ALL of this, there were times like these –*

Numbers 11:4-10 ESV

(4) Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat!

(5) We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

(6) But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at." (7) Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium.

(8) The people went about and gathered it and ground it in

handmills or beat it in mortars and boiled it in pots and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil.

(9) When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell with it.

(10) Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased.

Have YOU ever wanted to go back to Egypt? Abuse victims will surely experience this. *On average, it takes numerous attempts by the victim to leave her abuser before she finally does it.* And that, for many different reasons.

But one of those reasons is surely similar to the false thinking of the Jews in the wilderness. **NOTE this very, very carefully and guard against it in your own life!!!**

“Oh, this is soooo hard. I remember when I was still living with my abuser. Sure, it was tough in some ways, but look at all the benefits I had too. He fed me. He gave me a house to live in. And now look at me here in this little apartment without hardly any money.”

At such times, the victim (and all of us are prone to this) *fails to recognize and admit to herself the devastating damage that is done to the victim by the abuser.* We have looked, in these weeks in this study, of many of the horrible emotional, spiritual, psychological, and physical havoc wreaked upon the abuse victim and upon her children. **ALL OF US NEED TO FACE UP TO THIS AND ADMIT THAT WE, IN OUR IGNORANCE OR IN OUR DENIAL, SIMPLY DO NOT COME TO TERMS WITH JUST HOW DAMAGING ABUSE IS.**

How many times has the church – pastors, elders, church members – perhaps well-meaning, but well, ignorant or selfish – told an abused woman that God wants her to go back to Egypt and be a slave again under Pharaoh? I can tell you the answer – *many times.*

Divorce and Abuse

I am going to tell you something now that is guaranteed to stir up controversy, and worse, among Bible-believing Christians. Among people who are zealous to do God’s will. People, I hope, like us. And here it is. This is my conclusion –

“The victim of abuse, normally the wife but sometimes the husband, has

a right before God to leave Egypt, to divorce the abuser. And I believe that anyone who comes to a true and proper understanding of the nature and tactics and evil of genuine abuse, will come to the same conclusion.

Why do I say this is such a hot-button among Christians? First of all, because I have experienced the controversy myself. Secondly, because I have talked with other pastors who have come to the same conclusion and they have in a number of cases been attacked for their position. One pastor I talked to was really ostracized from the pastor's fellowship he was in. Another paid the price of a long-time friendship with another pastor being lost.

Here is what I have experienced – that when I tell conservative, Bible-believing pastors and Christians that I have concluded that we must let abuse victims know that they have the right before God to divorce their abuser, at the very minimum there is often a look of shock and surprise. This amazes me.

By the way, I base my conclusion on (after coming to a true understanding of just what abuse is and what it is like and what it does

to the victim) – I base my conclusion on 1 Cor 7 –

1 Corinthians 7:10-16 ESV

(10) To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband

(11) (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

(12) To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.

(13) If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

(14) For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. (15) But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

(16) For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Now, have you ever given real thought to just what it means to **consent to live with** a husband or wife? Or what it means (vs 15) to **separate** from a husband or wife? Far too many Christians, I believe, conclude and assume that this simply means –

- to not file formal, legal divorce proceedings
- to not physically throw the victim out of the house

I think that is the kind of application, or rather MIS-application that the Pharisees were characterized by.

Consenting to live with my wife, not separating from my wife, means rather that I *keep my wedding vows made before God and witnesses to love, honor, cherish my wife. To live out a one-flesh relationship with her. To love her as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.* To refuse to do so, to have ill-will (malevolence) toward her, to see her as an object and a servant for my glory, is NOT living with her.

“Abuse is, therefore, desertion. It is grounds for divorce.”

NOTE: Lest the libertine take this position and use it to justify divorce from a non-abusive man or woman, let me warn that you cannot

understand what we are saying here unless you understand it in the context of all of these sermons we have presented in this series. That is to say, you must FIRST understand clearly what abuse is. It is not just something that “drives you crazy” about your spouse. It doesn’t mean that your wife or husband has some flaw that you don’t like. No, abuse is a habitual, characterizing, ongoing mentality of power and control, of entitlement and of justification.

Now, if some – perhaps well-meaning – Christian objects to this conclusion that abuse is biblical grounds for divorce, that it is desertion – then I would put the following question to them –

“Can you explain, in some detail and with accuracy, what the nature of abuse is? That is to say, can you show me that you understand the mentality of abuse – indeed, that you understand that it is a mentality? Can you tell me about the methods and tactics of the abuser? Can you explain to me in reasonable detail what the effects are upon the victim of abuse? Upon the children in an abusive home?”

Because, think carefully about this – how can anyone come to a conclusion that something is NOT

grounds for divorce as long as they really know nothing about it? Let me ask that again – how can anyone come to a conclusion that something is NOT grounds for divorce as long as they really know nothing about it?

“Well, you know, marriage can be hard at times. All marriages have their ups and downs. None are perfect. We are all sinners. We need to persevere through trouble and trust the Lord. Besides, you know, he has never laid a hand on her.”

Can you see yourself saying something like that? It sounds so biblical and true, right (except the last phrase – which is horrible).

“But what we are ignorant of and what we MUST come to grips with, is that this monstrous thing we are calling abuse is a unique animal of its own. What is true about other sins and troubles in marriage is simply not true about abuse. The diagnosis is NOT the same. The REMEDY is not the same.”

Conclusion

How do you deal with the abusive person – be it a man or a woman? The first place to begin, is to come

to an understanding of what slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh is, what it is like, and what damage it does. And then to understand that the Lord wants His people FREE! Free from Satan, free from evil tyranny. He wants us walking in His truth, not in deception. Christ is the Passover Lamb whose blood delivers us from that bondage. And therefore, of ALL places in this world, *the Christian Church must be the pillar and support of the truth; it must be a place where there is no place for abuse; where Christ’s people enjoy freedom from the enemy’s enslavement; freedom from fear. This is what Christ came for.*

A Story to Read and Learn From

Here is a story. Be sure to read it! It is based on a true story but has been changed for confidentiality –

“Once upon a time, a young Christian woman from a sound Christian family met a young Christian man. He was the most charming man she had ever met and he showered his attentions on her. She was swept away.

Now, this young man was a church member. A FINE church member. People thought very highly of him, and YOU would have as well if you had known him. He was the first to

be there when someone needed help. He was respectful, a pleasure to speak with. He was a student of the Word and sound in reformed theology. Many thought him a candidate for the pastoral ministry.

The engagement proceeded up to the wedding day. It was a big wedding. Exciting. The perfect Christian couple. They were pronounced man and wife in a sound, reformed Baptist church. A great and memorable reception, and then they were off on the honeymoon and to their new life together.

And then it began – that very night.

This man, whom the bride and everyone thought they knew so well, on the wedding night, started his abuse. He interrogated her. In many other ways, he made it evident that HE was master and SHE his slave.

Later in that first year of their marriage, he hit her. She left. A few days later, unwisely but understandably, she went back and met him to tell him with Scriptural authority that what he was doing to her was sin. He flew into a rage and began to throw dangerous objects at her. She fled.

Later in the week, the young man's father and representatives from his

church (they had moved some distance from the church the bride grew up in and where they were married and had been attending his parents' church. Also a sound church). They asked to have everyone sit down together, including the pastor and an elder from the church where they were married. They were sure they could work things out with some counseling. And they were certain that divorce was not an option in this case.

What do you suppose the outcome was?

- *The pastor and elder of the church in which the bride grew up, and where they were married, along with the parents of the bride, said that there was NO WAY she could go back with her husband until and unless he went through some serious therapy and showed, over time, true change and repentance. They also maintained that divorce was justified – though they did not insist upon it immediately.*
- *The pastor and others, including the groom's parents, from the second church, insisted on short term counseling and reconciliation*

as an obligation. Divorce was not an option.

- *The people in the second church had been completely taken in by this young man, could not believe he could have done such things, and surely the bride shared some responsibility.*
- *The young man said that he would agree to come back to the first church, the church where the wedding took place and where his wife was now attending church again with her parents. They would end their separation and live together again. He said he would submit to counseling, and that the people in that church would see, as he ministered to them, that he was very sincere and truly changed and repentant.*
- *The pastor of the bride's church, who would be working with the young man in counseling, told him this – "No, you are not going to be serving others and having even much contact with them if you come here. The only person that I am going to be consulting in respect to your*

behavior/change/repentance, is your wife."

- *The young man left, never to return. He is in that second church with his parents. A divorce ensued. The young woman is happily re-married. The young man has found another victim and married her.*
- *Those two churches' fellowship remains broken to this day.*
- *The pastor who had married them was ostracized by many conservative pastors for allowing for divorce in this case.*

Do you see how the enemy works?
Do you understand why we must know his tactics and deceptions?