

KILLING SIN – PART 3: THE BATTLEGROUND

Ferndale Baptist Church – May 2015

Welcome/Pray

We talked last time about 6 reasons Owens gives as to why we need to kill sin.

We talked about the TACTICS of sin, how it tends to work - as a law

Romans 7:21 - So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

The HEART is the internal battleground upon which this battle is fought – when you really “FIND” sin, it won’t just be your outward actions. It resides in the heart.

How do we kill sin? Part of the answer to that question lies in understanding how sin works within the context of our human faculties.

SIN DECEIVES and it is at work in our faculties – Mind, Will, Affections ...
BUT PARTICULARLY, THE MIND

This is a generality, but I would divide human faculty into 3 parts and each of these parts has a duty before God - **the mind, the affections, the will**

- THE MIND: where we think, process, plan, reason, discern - the mind would also include THE CONSCIENCE, the God-given built-in sense of right/wrong, the moral compass where we approve/disapprove what is good
- THE EMOTIONS or AFFECTIONS: care, desire, long for
- THE WILL: where we carry out what the mind has approved and the affections have longed for

I tend to think of the MIND as the watchman of the soul – it is the entryway to your other faculties. In the fleshly/biological sense, it is the central system that controls all other systems. The fleshly mind is a parable of the spiritual mind. Scripture does put emphasis on the mind:

- In Luke 24:45 – Jesus “opened their **minds** so they could understand the Scriptures.”
- Rom. 8:6 - The **mind** of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace
- Rom. 12:2 - Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your **mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- A double-minded man is unstable in all he does (Jms 1:8)
- Note Paul's care & concern for the mind in 2 Cor - for both believers & unbelievers

- 2 Cor. 4:4 - The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- 2 Cor 11:3 - But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (again, addressing believers)

The mind's role is to watch carefully over the soul by questioning, assessing, making judgments – “Is this of God?” “Will this please God?”

- It holds the standard of the Word which enables it to make such judgements
- If the mind determines something is right, the affections fall in line and desire, yearn for, cling to that which the mind has said is good.
- The will then puts the soul to action, carrying out what the mind approved and what the affections hungered for.

This is why it matters...

...what you look at, what sort of images you put into your mind.

...what you listen to, what you read. Words/language are powerful. That's why there is preaching and reading of the Bible. Words go first into the mind.

Your mind is the primary target for sin. If you want to storm a castle, overthrow a fortress, rob a bank – take out the watchman first. As soon as he's out of the pic, he can't warn anybody – you sneak in and take the place down from the inside.

It's a pattern we see over and over in scripture and is reflected in our own lives; something enters the mind through the eye or ear - **If your mind can be deceived into approving sin**, the affections begin to long for it, the hands move to hold it - joy is destroyed. HEAD - HEART - HANDS (Eve in the garden, David, etc.)

So guarding the mind and equipping the mind is of utmost importance as we would go about killing sin.

1 Pet. 1:13 - *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

EXAMPLE: Turn to Genesis 39: 6-10 –Joseph is sold to a high-ranking Egyptian named Potiphar - In Genesis 39, we read of how Joseph excelled at his duties and became one of Potiphar's most trusted servants and was put in charge of his household.

As Joseph is being seduced by Potiphar's wife, he had in mind 2 things, 2 thoughts, that served as a line of defense against the deception of sin:

“How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9 ESV)

2 things that were in the forefront of his mind:

- The evil of sin – “How could I do this great wickedness?”
- The holiness of God – “How could I ... sin against God?”

Joseph understood this as the first line of offense in killing sin – prepare your mind for action. The mind's duty as a vigilant watchman over the soul is to know, meditate upon and keep to forefront the evil of sin, and the holiness of God.

If keeping in mind the evil of sin and holiness is so important, where would we go to fill our minds with such knowledge? THE WORD.

In that dark time in my marriage, the one consistent piece of counsel I received was “Go to the Word. Read the Word.” (Oddly enough, the reading of the Word of God was one of the first areas to go out the window during that season.)

- The Word sets the standard and the specifics for what the mind should accept and reject
- Spend time with God through His word - this is the very revelation of God Himself - it reveals your heart and it reveals His heart for you.
- And coming out that dark season in my marriage, that is what the Word did - it revealed His heart for me and for my wife; and as the Holy Spirit would interact with me through the Word, God began to take down the wall my wife and I had built and restore us in our brokenness

There is immense power of the Word of God in killing sin and living in joyful relationship with God.

2 Pet 1:3-4 tells us that as Christians, we are able to participate with the divine nature of God in His work on earth - we do this through the Spirit of God

When Paul tells to be killing sin in Romans 8, he specifies that it is “by the Spirit” we do so - *“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”*

We have been given the Holy Spirit to do this work of killing sin in our lives

- Why Eph 6 tells us to arm ourselves with **“sword of the Spirit”**
- This is not a glowing sword made of flames, like you see in pictures
- The text is telling us to use the same weapon the Holy Spirit uses – “which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17)
- the Spirit wields a sword b/c he is doing battle & His weapon is the Word of God

THE WORD WORKING IN TANDEM WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD GUARDS AND ARMS OUR MIND

- The Word shows and the Spirit confirms to us the vileness of sin - that every sin is rebellion against God
 - Sin is choosing to treasure anything over him
 - It pollutes, it defiles, it corrupts, it hardens
 - Be motivated to keep from sin by thinking about how much God hates sin – be shaken to the core by this!
- At the same time, the Word and the Spirit show us the holiness of God; think on His love, grace, mercy, kindness

- Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:14 that the love of Christ compels/controls us – so our mind ought to stay fixed upon Him
- The love of God propels us, fuels, drives us to joyful obedience
- Herein is the mark of the Christian – to live as Jesus lived: to know what pleases the Father, set the affection and the will toward that

So the mind's duty as a vigilant watchman over the soul is to know and hold on to both the evil of sin, and the holiness of God.

The Word points us to ONE SINGULAR PLACE where these views are held in perfect tension - **the Cross of Christ**

- Nothing shows God's hatred of our sin more than the cross.
- Nothing shows God's love for us than the cross.
- The cross of Jesus is an eternal expression of his justice, mercy / love, wrath / HOLINESS

THE GOSPEL – the “good news” – Let me REMIND US. Not because you don't know it, but because we FORGET IT. Why does anyone need good news? B/C we all start out with very bad news.

Romans 3:23 – all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We are born into sin – spiritually dead at birth; I never had to teach my kids to disobey me – it is ingrained in their natures

Romans 6:23 – the wages of sin is death.

About this point in the story, everyone – whether they believe in the God of the Bible or not – wants to point out that God is love. That is the cry of our day – above all else – **indeed, at the expense of all else** – God is love.

God is also JUST – and so sin must be dealt with. He cannot compromise who He is and simply sweep it under the rug.

- So we find ourselves by nature “children of wrath” – cursed, b/c of our sin, destined justly for Hell.

That is all very BAD NEWS. There is NO WORSE NEWS THAN THIS. But – the story doesn't end there.

As just as His wrath against sin & sinners is, God did not find it good to simply express His wrath toward us.

- He sent Jesus – His son – to absorb our punishment; to take upon Himself what was meant for us to bear
- John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only son and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
 - The wonder of “God so loved the world” is not that He loved so BIG a world, but that He loved so BAD a world – so sinful a world
- Rom. 3:25 – God presented him as a propitiation, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished
- 1 John 4:10 – This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a propitiation (an atoning sacrifice) for our sins.

Christ is our PROPITIATION – our SUBSTITUTE. He took upon Himself what we deserved – the wrath of God – He did not cancel it out, but absorbed it; stood in our place, taking it upon Himself, deflecting it from us. Leaving God’s love and wrath, mercy and justice completely fully satisfied.

>>>> He did not forgive because He wanted to be lenient with us – He forgave b/c His justice had been satisfied

- Gal. 3:13 – Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

So this is the GOOD NEWS of the GOSPEL – this is the essence of what it is to be saved –

- That God the Father sent Christ to save us – from ourselves, from our sin, from death, hell, from the just wrath of a holy transcendent God
- We know that Eph. 2:8–9 tell us it is by grace we are saved through faith, not of works – it is the gift of God
- This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a propitiation for our sins

THAT IS THE GOSPEL – The remedy for sin, the killing ground for sin begins with and rests upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news

- We need to daily preach the Gospel to ourselves
- To live our daily lives in the light of this good news

- To prioritize what we do and say and think according to this message
- We are in constant need of the Gospel in our lives; we need to be saturated by it.

What I just went through is really a shorthand expression of the Gospel. It is beautifully simple and majestically complex – and we are in constant need of its application to our lives.

We need to continually arm ourselves not just with the facts of the Gospel, but with the Gospel in its widest scope – the entire work and life of Jesus – not just his historic life, death, and resurrection, but His present, ongoing work in us through the person of the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus saves us not only from the penalty of sin, but also from its reigning dominion over us.
- Augustus Toplady called this twofold work of Jesus a “double cure” in his hymn Rock of Ages
 - Let the water and the blood, from thy riven side which flowed, be of sin a double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power

We must NOT TREAT THE GOSPEL AS THOUGH WE DON’T NEED IT ONCE WE’VE TRUSTED CHRIST. To do this is to give up the very ground upon which we wage war on sin.

- As Christians, we must not think of the Gospel only as something applicable to unbelievers, to those outside church walls.

A mark of Christian maturity is a deeper and deeper understanding of your need for the Gospel. You see this in Paul’s life; Remember the progression in Paul’s writing, as he refers to himself as...

- 1 Cor. 15:9 – written in 55AD – “least of the apostles”
- Eph. 3:7–8 – 60 AD – “least of all the saints”
- 1 Tim. 1:15 – 63–64AD – “chief of sinners”

He expresses clearly a deepening understanding of his need for the Gospel – **The Gospel, as a remedy for sin, plows the ground of our hearts so that we may see clearly our sin**

- When we step forward as sinners in need of the Gospel every day, it drives a knife into our propensity for self-righteousness; which is our seeking of rightness apart from God; which is sin

So the Gospel shows us our sin, prepares us to face our sin – **but just facing sin will only lead to guilt.**

- Respectable Sins by Bridges – p 34.

Not only does the Gospel show us our sin, but the Gospel frees us up to face our sin. (You can be shown something and refuse to face it)

- We are free to face our sin b/c the Gospel assures us that God no longer holds it against us.
- Hear Paul quote David in Romans 4:7-8 – Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him
- Why does God not hold our sin against us? B/c of Jesus
- Isaiah 53:6 – We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- The only sin that can be successfully fought against is forgiven sin.

To the extent that you and I can grasp deeply the great truth that God has forgiven our sin through Christ, we will be freed to honestly and humbly face our sin.

Only once we have been shown our sin, we can face our sin and be freed from the guilt. Once we have grasped that freedom, we can deal with the activity of sin – we can set about killing it with daily applications of the Gospel.

We must go back OVER AND OVER TO THE FACT that there can be no application of the Gospel, no killing of sin without the work of the Holy Spirit

Gal. 5:16 – So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Rom. 8:13 – For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live...

Practically speaking, the Christian lives under the controlling influence of the Spirit, as we expose our minds to seek to obey His moral will for us

as revealed in Scripture. We live in dependence on him through prayer as we cry out for His power to enable us to obey His will.

There is a principal in Christian life – DEPENDENT RESPONSIBILITY

- We are responsible before God to obey His word and to put to death sin
- but IT IS AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK – we do not have the ability to do so within ourselves.
- And so, we are dependent upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit – we are both responsible and dependent – **KILLING SIN is man's responsibility empowered & upheld by God's provision**

How the Holy Spirit works in us is in one sense mystery – can't comprehend it or explain it fully.

BUT – There will be fruit – incremental progress. The Spirit is at work in tangible ways

- He works through the conviction of sin
- through the Scriptures, which He uses to reprove & correct us
- Through our consciences, that become sensitive by exposure to the Word of God
- And the Holy Spirit enables us to fight and kill our sin.
 - Rom. 8:13 – if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live...
- The Spirit alone convinces our hearts of the danger of sin
- The Spirit reveals the fullness of Christ for our deliverance
- The Spirit alone settles our heart to expect to receive the help that can only come from Christ
- The Spirit alone supports us as to cry out to God in distress over our sin

Let us be assured of this – we will win. We will prevail over this enemy within. You may fight for a long, long, long time – but victory will be ours; it will come at the appointed time, and it will come from the hand of Jesus

Have your heart settled on that expectation – that Christ will prevail, that your sin will die, that our souls will be completely satisfied in Him, in His glory – Fight – and you will see your flesh crumble. Fight well, fight hard – on the other side is peace.