

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)

“The Deeds of the Flesh ‘Fleshed Out”

September 12, 2010

Sermon Text: Galatians 5:16-21

Scripture Reading:

2 Samuel 13:1-20

Introduction-

Galatians 5:16-21 ESV

(16) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

(17) For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

(18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

(19) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,

(20) idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,

(21) envy, drunkenness, orgies,

and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The dynamic, the working power or principle of the New Covenant is not the keeping of the law – “do this and live” – but it is the leading of the Holy Spirit – the *desires of the Spirit* – in the Christian. In EVERY true Christian. Where the desires and leading of the Spirit are absent, Christ is absent and there is an unconverted heart. The life that is characterized then by the works of the flesh is a life that evidences no knowledge of Christ. *“Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Just as the flesh lusts after the wicked works of the flesh – so that by its very nature, the flesh gratifies itself by wickedness, so the Spirit of Christ in the believer lusts – only this is a holy lust for Christ and obedience to Him. The Spirit of Christ is *gratified*, satisfied, by the things Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit “itches” for holiness – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness – and is “scratched” by the

production and performance of these things.

Paul is very plain with us – listen to it once more - *“Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Lawlessness walked in is a path that leads to hell. The keeping of God’s law from the very heart as a result of the holy “lusting” of the Spirit for righteousness is a life proceeding down the road of life in Christ.

Have you ever given serious consideration to these two lists – the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit? Consider the “bad fruit” –

sexual immorality,
impurity,
sensuality,
idolatry,
sorcery,
enmity,
strife,
jealousy,
fits of anger,
rivalries,
dissensions,
divisions,
envy,
drunkenness,
orgies

Lets see if we can categorize these evils –

Indulgence of the Body – Sins Against One’s Own Body

Sexual immorality
Impurity
Sensuality
Drunkenness
Orgies

False Religion – Exchange of the True God for the Lie

Idolatry
Sorcery

Self-will – Relationship Sins

Strife
Jealousy
Fits of Anger
Rivalries
Dissensions
Divisions
Envy

The Greatest Commandments are two – that we love God with all our heart and mind and soul, and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. As you can see, the flesh violates both of these commandments.

“Where Christ is absent, there is a heart that craves the deeds of the flesh. There ALWAYS will be these three categories of sin, though some may be more evident than others. Carnal indulgence, false religion, and self-

will. In the case of the abusive person, then, we can be sure that inside the “clean cup” (as it appears on the outside) is filth and every kind of evil. The self-willed man who is given to fits of anger, who stirs up strife and divisions and dissensions, the man who is jealous and envious and sees others as his rivals, this is a man whose professed “Christianity” is mere idolatry and sorcery and this is a man who is given to evil indulgence of his body – sexual immorality, impurity, and every kind of moral uncleanness.”

This is one chief reason for the façade he builds and the mask he wears – to hide the filth that is inside of him. You certainly see this illustrated in the religious hypocrites Jesus so strongly rebuked –

Matthew 23:25-28 ESV

(25) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

(26) You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

(27) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

(28) So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Let's illustrate the relationship sins from what we have learned so far about the abusive man – thereby helping us to see more clearly what these deeds of the flesh are that are opposed to the Spirit.

Just for review however, let's first remind ourselves of the definition of an abusive person –

“An abuser is a man who chronically makes his wife/girlfriend feel mistreated or devalued. He may employ psychological, verbal, physical, or sexual means, but all have similar effects on the victim. He will exhibit elements [on a scale of intensity] of denial, minimization, and distortion, and even justification about his actions. The abuser has an abusive mentality that makes it difficult for him to even imagine being in a respectful and equal relationship with a woman.”
[Bancroft]

“Commonly, an abuser will not listen to the woman's [ie, his victim's] perspective at all. He feels completely justified and becomes retaliatory if she stands up for herself.” [Bancroft]

“One of the prevalent features of life with an angry or controlling person is that he frequently tells you what you should think and tries to get you to doubt or devalue your own perceptions and beliefs.” [Bancroft]

“Since nobody’s perfect, how do I know the difference between a bad day when he’s just being a jerk and a pattern that adds up to something more serious? It is true that almost everyone does yell at one point or another in a relationship...or act selfish or insensitive. These behaviors are hurtful and worthy of criticism, but they aren’t all abuse, and they don’t have the same psychological effects that abuse does. At the same time, all of these behaviors are abusive when they are part of a pattern of abuse. The term abuse is about power; it means that a person is taking advantage of a power imbalance to exploit or control someone else. Thus, the defining point of abuse is when the abuser starts to exercise power over the victim in a way that causes harm to her and creates a privileged status for him.” [Bancroft]

Here are some indicators that a person is in fact an abuser –

- He retaliates against you for complaining about his behavior

- He tells you that your objections to his mistreatment are your own problem
- He gives apologies that sound insincere or angry, and he demands that you accept them
- He blames you for the impact of his behavior
- It’s never the right time, or the right way, to bring things up
- He undermines your progress in life
- He denies what he did
- He justifies his hurtful or frightening acts or says that you ‘made him do it’
- He touches you in anger or puts you in fear in other ways
- He coerces you into having sex or sexually assaults you
- His controlling, disrespectful, or degrading behavior is a pattern
- You show signs of being abused (fear of him, being distanced from family and friends, level of energy is declining, you can’t do anything right, you feel like you have been mentally ‘messed with’)

1. Strife/Dissensions/Divisions -

Why would a person want to produce strife? Why would someone crave to turn the people, for example, in his

family against one another? And how does he go about doing it?

Remember, for the abusive person, it is all about power and control. A family that is divided, a church that is divided into factions – is much easier to control. Unity is the abuser's enemy. Therefore, he will do things like –

a. Undermining his wife's authority. When children know that mom's authority is usually overruled by Dad's power, they know that they can play one parent against the other. They vie for the favor of the parent with the final say.

b. Abusive behavior is divisive by its very nature. When the abuser unleashes one of his weapons, family members start to blame one another for the incident. "It's your fault! You set him off!"

c. By showing favoritism. The abuser may treat one child as his buddy and ignore the others. The children who choose to distance themselves from their mother and draw closer to the abuser receive very, very powerful emotional rewards from him for doing so.

d. Openly shaming children. Boys are ridiculed for being "mommy's boy."

e. Telling family members lies about one another.

f. Using collective punishment. One child's supposed misbehavior results in consequences for everyone.

The abuser utilizes all of these tactics (and more) to sow division so that his power and control are increased. Divide and conquer is his method. People who are fighting with one another forget who the real enemy is.

THERE ARE HUGE LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH TO LEARN FROM ALL OF THIS! A DIVISIVE, ABUSIVE, POWER-SEEKING PERSON WILL USE THE VERY SAME METHODS IN THE CHURCH.

"A home where a woman is abused is a small-scale model of much larger oppressive systems that work in remarkably similar ways. Many of the excuses an abusive man uses for verbally tearing his partner to shreds are the same ones that a power mad boss uses for humiliating his or her employees. The abusive man's ability to convince himself that his domination of you is for your own good is paralleled by the dictator who says, 'People in this country are too primitive for democracy.' The divide and conquer strategies used by abusers are reminiscent of a corporate

head who tries to break the labor union by giving certain groups of workers favored treatment. The making of an abuser is thus not necessarily restricted to the specific values his society teaches him about men's relationships with women.

If you look at any oppressive organization or system, from a racist country club up to a military government, you will find most of the same behaviors and justifications by the powerful that abusers use in their homes. The tactics of control, the intimidation of victims who try to protest, the undermining of efforts at independence, the negative distortions about victims in order to cast blame upon them, the careful cultivation of the public image of the oppressors – all are present, along with many other parallels...In short, the abusive mentality is the mentality of oppression.” [Bancroft]

Are you beginning to understand and see more clearly why we are studying this topic of abuse as an illustration of sin? It is because *the very same tactics used by the abusive man against his wife will be used by him in the church! And his methods are devilishly deceptive, damaging, devastating, and wicked. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE IGNORANT OF THEM.*

Galatians 5:1 ESV

(1) For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

“Nothing would work faster to end the abuse than for the abuser's friends and family [and church] to stop enabling him in his abuse.”

Let's move on then to this whole aspect of the jealousy, envy and rivalry of sin and see it illustrated as well in the abusive man.

2. Jealousy/Rivalry/Envy –

We have already learned that the abuser sees his wife/victim as an adversary or competitor. This is why he devalues her experiences and accomplishments. Her successes in life are a threat to his control and power over her. For example, Carol married a pastor – Dave. As the years went by, Dave's abusive power and control resulted in his dismissal from three churches. Carol had to go to work. She went into the world of finance and over the years was promoted to the position of vice-president, overseeing a number of other employees. You can be assured that Dave would have put down her accomplishments, chalking them all up to a feminist atmosphere or some such thing.

Jealousy, rivalry, and envy. The deeds of the flesh.

“There is a real frustration of inequality in an abusive relationship. Verbal abusers block discussions because they are not willing to talk with their mates on an equal basis. The abuser prevents the possibility of mutual support and planning together and so deprives himself and his victim of the many benefits such a relationship would bring. Much of the confusion that the victims experience trying to understand interactions with the abuser would be cleared up if they knew that the real issue is that their mates are not willing to accept them as equals.”

See it? Jealousy, rivalry, envy. The Spirit of Christ is set right against these things. “Rejoice with those who rejoice.” “Consider others more important than yourself.” The abuser knows nothing of this.

“Anything achieved by the victim is seen as a threat by the abuser. The abuser’s worth is derived from a sense of one-upmanship and winning over. If the victim accomplishes something, the abuser views her accomplishment competitively. Dora tells this story –

‘While Dean was on a business trip and I was home with the children, I repainted the bathroom, which really

needed it. When Dean got home I was happy to have finished it in time, as a little surprise. I wanted to tell him right away but waited until after dinner.”

[NOTE: Men, do you begin to see the remarkable spirit of your wife? Dora’s husband Dean was a real jerk. He had abused her for years. Yet here she is, eagerly trying to do something for him – *and all she wants or needs is empathy and affirmation from him!!* YOUR WIFE WANTS TO SEE YOU SUCCEED! SHE WANTS TO HAVE A WONDERFUL MARRIAGE AND A GREAT FAMILY! Yes, there are exceptions – there are abusive women as well. But the great majority of the time it is a Dora/Dean scenario].

“Then, when I showed it to him saying, ‘Look! I painted the bathroom. Doesn’t it look nice!’ Dean became very angry. He yelled at me, ‘You think you do all the work! Well, I work, too!’ I said that I didn’t think that at all. He seemed to stay upset and angry. I couldn’t get him to understand my intentions. I felt disappointment and a lot of pain, and frustration too. How did I give him the impression that I thought I did all the work?” NOTE: Dean never became angry like this if anyone else was around]. [Evans, The Verbally Abusive Relationship]

Dora did not understand what was going on, and if she did, it would help her greatly. SHE was not to blame. SHE was not the cause. In fact, Dean approached their marriage competitively.

Jealousy/Rivalry/Envy.

2 Corinthians 12:20 ESV

(20) For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish--that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

The abusive, controlling, power-seeking individual will approach the church in this very same sense of envy and jealousy and rivalry. He will minimize the successes of others – he will crave the glory for himself. He will accuse and sow doubt when he sees those he considers his rivals succeeding. *Christ's people must be wise to this tactic!*

James 3:14-17 ESV

(14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

(15) This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

(16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

(17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

Jealousy also desires to possess. Now, we know there is a good and holy kind of jealousy – the jealousy that Christ has for His own people. He is betrothed to His Bride and will not share her with another.

But the jealousy of the flesh is evil. It desires to possess for its own self-serving glory. Here is an example –

3. Fits of Anger -

Ephesians 6:9 ESV

(9) Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

You may have concluded by now that the abusive man is an angry man. And, indeed, the abuser does use fits and outbursts of anger as a very common weapon in his wicked arsenal of abuse. Where power and control are denied or threatened, murderous anger often lashes out.

James 4:1-2 ESV

(1) What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

(2) You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

Now, let's notice something about this matter of anger. Do you see here in James 4 that anger is not the root problem, *but rather it is a fruit of something else?* Specifically – “You desire and do not have, so you murder/you covet and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel.” And in the case of the abuser, his desire is for power and control to which he believes he is fully entitled and therefore fully justified in using means to obtain it. Anger is the result of denied desire.

Now, this leads us to a very, very important principle, and here it is –

“The sinner’s (abuser’s) fundamental problem is NOT anger. It is his thinking/mindset. It is a mindset of privilege and entitlement, of power and control. When that mindset is opposed, anger lashes out. Therefore, no amount of “anger management” counseling will really address the root problem. The root problem is not anger, it is a depraved, fallen mind

that can only be transformed by Christ.”

Therefore, we err if we try to explain away the abuser’s abuse with simplistic notions like –

- He just has a short fuse
- She is just impatient
- If I try harder in this area, I won’t set him off
- He gets mean when he drinks – it’s just the alcohol
- He’s really a teddy bear underneath

NO! The real problem is the fallen, self-serving, entitled mind.

One way that you can prove that anger is not the fundamental cause of abuse is to simply realize that many acts of abuse – even some very terrible ones – are performed “in cold blood.” Perhaps these sessions of abuse are even the most damaging and frightening than the ones where the abuser is enraged. An abusive man can actually carry out his most heinous acts of abuse during “the seeming good times” when everyone is calm.

For example, listen to Bancroft describe the abuser whose style he names “The Water Torturer” –

“The Water Torturer’s style proves that anger doesn’t cause abuse. He

can assault his partner psychologically without even raising his voice. He tends to stay calm in arguments, using his own evenness as a weapon to push his victim over the edge. He often has a superior or contemptuous grin on his face, smug and self-assured. He uses a repertoire of aggressive conversational tactics at low volume, including sarcasm, derision – such as openly laughing at her – mimicking her voice, and cruel, cutting remarks. Like Mr. Right, he tends to take things she has said and twist them beyond recognition to make her appear absurd, perhaps especially in front of other people. He gets to his partner through a slow but steady stream of low-level emotional assaults, and perhaps occasional shoves or other ‘minor’ acts of violence that don’t generally cause visible injury but may do great psychological harm. He is relentless in his quiet derision and meanness.

The impact on a woman of all these subtle tactics is that either her blood temperature rises to a boil or she feels stupid and inferior, or some combination of the two. In an argument, she may end up yelling in frustration, leaving the room crying, or sinking into silence. The Water Torturer then says, ‘See, you’re the abusive one, not me. You’re the one who’s yelling and refusing to talk things out rationally. I wasn’t even

raising my voice. It’s impossible to reason with you.’” [Bancroft, Why Does He Do That?]

And ALL of this without showing any sign of anger.

“Friends and relatives who have witnessed the couple’s interactions may back him up. They shake their heads and say to each other, ‘I don’t know what goes on with her. She just explodes at him sometimes, and he’s so low-key.’ Their children can develop the impression that ‘Mom blows up over nothing.’ She herself may start to wonder if there is something psychologically wrong with her. If you are involved with a Water Torturer, you may struggle for years trying to figure out what is happening.”

Can you see why we must be very careful of Mr. Nice Guy? The Water Torturer could come into a church as a “servant of righteousness” when in fact he is from the pit.

Conclusion

Well, there you have it. Some clear illustrations of what Paul meant when he wrote to us about the *deeds of the flesh*. Let’s end with a bit of fresh air by hearing about the very opposite of this wicked abuse –

1 Corinthians 13:1-7 ESV

(1) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

(2) And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

(3) If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

(4) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

(5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

(7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.