

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)

***“We Are Not Ignorant of Satan’s
Devices – Or Are We”***

September 5, 2010

Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:12

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-
13

Introduction-

“Couples counseling can end up being a big setback for the abused woman. The more she insists that her husband’s cruelty or intimidation needs to be addressed, the more she may find the therapist/counselor looking down at her, saying, ‘It seems like you are determined to put all the blame on him and are refusing to look at your part in this.’ The counselor thereby inadvertently echoes the abuser’s attitude, and the woman is forced to deal with yet another context in which she has to defend herself. Most counselors in such circumstances are well intentioned but fail to understand the dynamics of abuse and allow the abuser to shape their

perceptions of the situation. [Lundy Bancroft, Why Does He Do That?]

Sin is darkness. Evil craves and thrives upon secrecy and hiddenness. The wicked man exerts great energy and elaborate devices to make sure most people only see his mask. Think of the Lone Ranger – the great hero on a white stallion off to rescue someone else. Who doesn’t love the Lone Ranger? But who is this man behind the mask? When the mask comes off at home?

“Irene, an abused woman who tells her own story in public and has appeared on several panels with me, shares the following account: She had been in couples counseling for about 6 months with her husband, Quentin, when one day the therapist decided it was time to get the ball rolling. He said, ‘These sessions have gradually stopped going anywhere, and I think I know why. Irene, you’re not opening up very much, and I think you need to take more emotional risks,’ Irene felt that the therapist was right; she had in fact been exposing very little week to week. So she decided to take the plunge. She told the therapist about

Quentin's abuse of her, which included considerable physical violence and the downward emotional spiral she had been in as a result. Quentin appeared moved and shaken, his eyes reddening as if he might cry at any moment. 'I have really been in denial about my violence,' he told the therapist, 'and I haven't been facing how badly it has been affecting Irene.' The therapist felt that a crucial barrier to progress had been overcome. 'Now,' he declared, 'I think your couples work can begin to yield results for you.'"

And so it did!

On the drive home from the session, Quentin kept one hand on the steering wheel. In the other hand, he clutched a large handful of Irene's hair as he repeatedly slammed her head into the dashboard, screaming, 'I told you to never (obscenity) talk to anyone about that, you! You promised me! You are a liar! And similar insults in a nonstop rant. After hearing Irene's account, I was careful to never again underestimate the risk to an abused woman of couples counseling. If couples counseling is the only type of help that your abuser is willing to get – because he wants to make sure that he can blame the problem on you – you may think, 'Well, it's better than not getting any counseling at all. And maybe the counselor will see the things he does and convince him to get

help...It won't happen. Increasingly, therapists across the United States and Canada are refusing to engage in couples or family sessions with an abuser." [Bancroft]

Sin is darkness. Sin is secrecy. Sin is deceptive. Abuse is Satanic in character – it is murderous, and it is a liar.

Christ is light. Christ is truth laid bare and wide open. Christ's "yes" is "yes." Christ is love, He is life, He can only speak truth.

Our goal in this series is to expose evil. To learn about our own sin so that we can see it and repent of it, but particularly to expose the sin of the abusive man. And more specifically, to expose the sin of the abusive man who uses Christ as a mask for his abuse, so that he can bring Christ's people into slavery, feeding his lust for power and control. We dare not be ignorant of Satan's devices – such abusers have come here before and there is no reason why we should not expect another one day. We must not be deceived by a Quentin, for example, and end up being used by him to justify and further the abuse of his victims.

Darkness is comfortable It is the sphere in which we sleep and doze. It

is dreamland. But Christ's command to us all is –

Ephesians 5:13-14 ESV

(13) But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,

(14) for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

In this sense, the sinner slumbers himself into hell. If we would be saved, we must WAKE UP, step out of the darkness and into the light. Which means – turn from our lies and deceptions and embrace Christ's truth.

I. Take No Part in Unfruitful Works of Darkness, but Expose Them

As Christ's people, we have the most powerful resource in the world for exposing Satan and his dark schemes – the Word of God which is a blazing light. Darkness always is defeated by it. The Word of God is the most penetrating light ever – more so than the blazing sun:

Hebrews 4:12-13 ESV

(12) For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of

joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

(13) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

This is the GREAT encouragement for the Christian. And it is the great DREAD for the wicked. The abusive man – the Quentin or the Diotrefes – stands naked before God. Here is this offensive weapon in the armament given to us by Christ (Eph 6) – the Sword of the Spirit. By wielding it, the wicked man is exposed. Darkness is made light.

Now, here is a question –

Christian, do you really WANT the light of Christ to shine? As we said, this light is very disturbing to our slumber. Like a sleepy sluggard who winces when someone enters his dark room and flips on the light switch, our flesh resists the light. Christ's light comes as a sword to divide relationships. It exposes our own motives. It shatters false, idolatrous concepts that we hold about others. It turns the world upside down. Do you WANT the light of Christ to shine into your world? If you are going to follow Christ, then it is going to have to be in the light of His truth.

When we get all excited and emotionally moved by singing choruses like “Shine, Jesus Shine” – do we really understand the implications? Maybe you have grown accustomed to the world of abuse. The Light of Christ is going to totally and radically threaten that world. Perhaps you, like the Corinthians, bear gladly with a power-seeking, abusive person who even “strikes you in the face” – because of what you are getting out of the relationship – a kind of twisted symbiosis, we might say. *“AWAKE, O sleeper, and arise from the dead! And Christ will shine on you!”*

1 Corinthians 4:5 ESV

(5) Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

So, here we go. Let’s talk some more about the tactics of the enemy. The armory of the abusive man. Let’s get right down into the trenches of life and touch these weapons so that we expose them and understand them for what they really are – evil!

[I take these examples and descriptions from Patricia Evans’ book, The Verbally Abusive Relationship] -

1. The Weapon of Withholding

We have already addressed some of the abusive man’s arsenal –

- a. Secrecy – this is HUGE and we will speak about it more in the future.
- b. Surprise attack – the attack of abuse may come at any time, even in what appears to be a happy time.
- c. Opposing the success and happiness of the victim.

1 Samuel 16:7 ESV

(7) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

Psalms 90:8 ESV

(8) You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

Jeremiah 17:10 ESV (10) "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

d. Putting down the victim's interests.

e. The good guy/bad guy dagger. This is a particularly cruel weapon because it plays on a false trust to deceive the victim.

f. Isolation (solitary confinement) – in various ways – economic, control of communications, false statements about the victim to her friends and relatives – the abuser isolates his victim so she is more easily controlled.

And then the list goes on - here is this weapon called withholding. *“If there is a relationship, then there must be more than the exchange of information. A relationship requires intimacy. Intimacy requires empathy. To hear and understand another person's feelings – empathy. The intimacy of a relationship cannot be achieved if one party is unwilling to share himself and is unable to support his partner in an empathetic way. One person cannot create intimacy in a relationship.*

The abuser who refuses to listen to his partner, denies her experience, and refuses to share himself with her is violating the primary agreement of a relationship. He is withholding.”

The Corinthians were doing something similar to the Apostle Paul, and he calls them on it. It is destructive to

true Christian fellowship, but many professing Christians do in fact withhold themselves from the body of Christ. Perhaps you are?

2 Corinthians 6:11-14 ESV

(11) We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open.

(12) You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.

(13) In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

(14) Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Withholding. *“Simply put, withholding is a choice to keep virtually all one's thoughts, feelings, hopes, and dreams to oneself and to remain silent and aloof toward one's partner, to reveal as little as possible, and to maintain an attitude of cool indifference. A confirmed verbal abuser may go on for months or years without attempting to engage his partner and without emphatically responding to her.*

Withholding can go on for years because the partner (victim), after trying to engage her mate, may assume that he is, after all, a very quiet person, or totally self-contained or,

maybe, extremely shy, or has come 'hang up' or is, maybe, slightly autistic. She can conjecture any one of these reasons for the verbal abuser's behavior **MORE THAN SHE CAN CONCEIVE OF HIS REALITY!** She may never doubt for a minute that he really does want to share himself with her." [Evans]

But the reality of the abuser is that he does NOT want to share himself with her. His withholding is a tactic of abuse.

Listen to this real-life example between May and her husband, Mel –

"One time I heard Mel tell his brother that he wondered what a certain actor was thinking during a dramatic scene in a movie we had seen. (I really couldn't recall Mel every saying he wondered about anything before). Later that evening I told him that I'd heard him mention this, and that I thought it was wonderful that he was expressing his thoughts that way, and that I'd love to have him share that kind of thing with me.

I thought, now, at last, he'll understand. I have a concrete example for him. And not only that, I also thought that his sharing what he wondered about was probably a real breakthrough for him. He'd always been so silent, except for jokes and

occasional comments, that I had come to think he was sort of autistic. I told him that he might not have realized it, but I really was interested in his thoughts. I believed that if I told him that what he had said to his brother was the kind of thing I wanted him to share with me, he would understand and would talk to me. He never really did.

What confused me was that he said, 'Oh, OK, I didn't think you'd be interested.' As if he understood, but he never really seemed to understand." [Evans]

"Cora had a similar experience. She said, 'I didn't know what to do. For a while there, I thought that if I were somehow more interesting or entertaining or more intelligent or more well-read or more educated or something, he'd talk to me once in a while.' Thoughtfully, she continued: 'I guess I really started thinking that something was wrong when I was over at a friend's house and her husband came in and started telling her about a fellow he met at the tennis court. I couldn't remember Curt sharing like that. Being with Curt was a lonely experience." [Evans]

The verbal abuser who chooses to withhold will respond to requests for communication with –

- *There's nothing to talk about*
 - *What do you want me to say?*
 - *What are you complaining about; I do talk to you*
 - *You never let me talk*
 - *Why should I tell you if I like it; you'll do what you want anyway*
 - *You wouldn't be interested*
- [Evans]

Young people – I can remember doing this very thing to my parents when I was in my teens. The fact is, I was only interested in my own world – not in anyone else's. I shut them out and was annoyed when they asked me how my day went. This is withholding and it is a certain sign of a sinful, self-consumed heart.

Now consider the effects of withholding. It makes the victim think something is wrong with her. It denies her the intimacy that marriage is designed for, and in most cases reserves that intimacy for someone else – like the abuser's buddies.

Intimacy in a relationship must go beyond "I'll be late tonight," or "Where's my hammer?" or "The car is almost out of gas." The withholder is comfortable at this level. But to move on to intimacy, to enter into "Oh, that's a good idea. I see what you mean." or "Well, what are your thoughts on this?" or "You look like something is bothering you. What is it?" – these are

arenas the withholder/abuser will not enter.

Now I challenge you – particularly husbands. You may not be a habitual, full-blown, hypocrite of an abuser – or maybe you are. But we all need to understand that this withholding is a breaking of our marriage covenant "to have and to hold" and to love as Christ loves His bride the church. If I asked for a show of hands right now from the wives, how many would go up if they were honestly answering the question – is your husband withholding intimacy from your relationship?

II. The Weapon of Countering

This tactic is rooted in the abuser's perception of his victim as the adversary. If she does not agree with him on some point, he sees it as an attack and as a threat to his power and control. As a result, it is his practice to oppose and counter and argue against her "takes" on things. He denies her own experiences and her perceptions of those experiences. Listen to Evans on the effects of this missile –

"As a category of verbal abuse, countering is one of the most destructive to a relationship because it prevents all possibility of discussion, it consistently denies the victim's reality, and it prevents the victim from

knowing what the abuser really thinks about anything.”

What this means is that truth is not the issue for the abuser. He will oppose simply to oppose because he dare not let his victim hold a different view from him. For example –

“Nan recognized countering when she had the following interaction. She agreed with Ned, repeating a statement he had made, and then she noticed that Ned immediately countered the statement! She then repeated his counter, agreeing with it, and Ned countered that. Here is the interaction –

Ned: *That lamp shade doesn't go with the lamp.*

Nan: *Oh, yeah, the lamp shade doesn't go with the lamp.*

Ned: *It does too go with the lamp.*

Nan: *Oh, the shade goes with the lamp.*

Ned: *You can't say it goes with it when the color's off.*

Nan: *Oh, I see, the color is off.*

Ned: *That's not what's wrong with it.*

Nan: *I'm trying to find out what you mean.*

Ned: *No, you're not. You're twisting my words around!*

As strange as this interaction is, it is not at all uncommon. Countering truly blocks all communication and all possibility of intimacy.” [Evans]

Jeremiah 17:9-10 ESV

(9) The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

(10) "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

“The abuser sees an argument as war. His goal is not to negotiate different desires, to understand each other's experiences, or to think of mutually beneficial solutions. He only wants to win. Winning is measured by who talks the most, who makes the most devastating insults, and who controls the final decision that comes out of the debate. He will not settle for anything other than victory. Thus, the whole relationship is a war.” [Bancroft]

Let's take a look at this weapon of countering even more by considering an abusive man whom Bancroft has called “Mr. Right.” There will be a bit

of him in each of us, and we need to confront him – but the abusive man is often characterized and defined by just this description of Mr. Right.

“Mr. Right considers himself the ultimate authority on every subject under the sun; you might call him ‘Mr. Always Right.’ He speaks with absolute certainty (even about subjects he has not studied at all). He brushes your opinions aside like annoying gnats. He seems to see the world as a huge classroom, in which HE is the teacher, and YOU are his student. He finds little of value in your thoughts or insights, so he seeks to empty out your head and fill it up with HIS jewels of brilliance.

When Mr. Right sits in one of my groups for abusive men, he often speaks of his partner as if she were in danger from her own idiocy and he needs to save her from herself. Mr. Right has difficulty speaking to his partner – or about her- without a ring of condescension in his voice. And in a conflict his arrogance gets even worse.

Mr. Right’s superiority is a convenient way for him to get what he wants. When he and his partner are arguing about their conflicting desires, he turns it into a clash between Right and Wrong or between Intelligence and Stupidity. He ridicules and discredits

her perspective so that he can escape dealing with it. Here is a conversation I had with a Mr. Right whom I worked with in one of my abuser groups:

Bancroft: Pat, do you have any abusive behaviors to report from this past week?

Pat: Well, I did yell at Gwen once and called her (foul name). We were fighting about money as usual. [It would be interesting to ask Gwen if this was a fight. She may well have simply voiced an opinion]

Bancroft: What was Gwen’s perspective in the argument?

Pat: She thinks money grows on trees.

Bancroft: So, Gwen said that money grows on trees?

Pat: Well no, not just like that. But that’s how she acts.

Bancroft: Let’s try again. What was she saying in the argument?

Pat: She thinks we have enough money to get both of the children whole new sets of clothes. But we just bought all new stuff for them only a few weeks ago. And we just don’t have it in the bank right now.

Bancroft: Does Gwen agree that the last round of shopping was only a few weeks ago?

Pat: No, she says it was 4 months ago, at the beginning of the summer, which is ridiculous. I can remember that the summer was more than half over.

Bancroft: So her memory is different from yours. Did she say why she thinks it was earlier?

Pat: Of course not, she's... Well, maybe she said something about how she remembers she paid the credit card bill for those clothes while the children were still in school. But she's wrong.

Bancroft: Now, you said that the money simply isn't there. Gwen obviously thinks differently. Where does she think the money should come from?

Pat: I already told you, she wants me to be a magician who can just make it appear.

Bancroft: But she must have been making points about it. What was she saying?

Pat: Oh, I don't know... She says that we should sell our car and get a piece of junk, which would just end up

costing us more in the long run, plus I don't want to deal with it.

Bancroft: What do you drive now?

Pat: A SAAB

Bancroft: Let me guess. She would like to trade the SAAB in on a reliable car that has lower monthly payments, cheaper parts, and fewer repair bills.

Pat: Yeah! That's what I said! – a piece of junk!

What Pat revealed in this exchange was that each time Gwen attempts to voice her opinion or put forth her views, he twists her statements to make them sound absurd.

This is countering, and it is wicked, wicked, wicked.

“When Mr. Right decides to take control of a conversation, he switches into his Voice of Truth, giving the definitive pronouncement on what is the correct answer or the proper outlook. Abuse counselors call this tactic defining reality.

And the terrible, terrible effects of all this on the victim? –

“Over time, his tone of authority can cause his partner [or those close to him who are subject to his abuse like

his children or like victims in a church], *to doubt her own judgment and come to see herself as not very bright. I notice how often I am speaking with the intelligent-sounding partner of one of my abuser-clients, only to have her say to me, 'I'm not that smart.' The abuser WANTS her to doubt her mental abilities in this way, so he can control her better.*"

Finally –

"Besides knowing all about the world, Mr. Right is also an expert on YOUR life and how you should live it. He has the answers to your conflicts at work, how you should spend your time, and how you should raise your children. He is especially knowledgeable about YOUR faults, and he likes to inventory what is wrong with you, as if tearing you down were the way to improve you. He may seem to enjoy periodically straightening you out in front of other people to humiliate you, thereby establishing his unquestionable intellectual superiority. [Though the normal practice is to do this when he has you alone]."
[Bancroft]

Well! What does this knowledge do for you? If you are a victim, then it will begin to be freeing to you. If you are an abuser, then you won't like it at all.

Let's sum up Mr. Right from the Epistle of James –

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.

I hope that as the Lord is teaching us these things, victims will be helped and freed, the guilty will see and be cut to the heart in repentance and repent, and that, I suppose in some ways most of all –

That Christ Reformation Church will become more and more and more a pillar and support of Christ's truth so that, among other things, it will be a place where the guilty must either flee from or repent, and a place where victims will be believed and helped.