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Sermon Notes

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Defeating the Enemy Within

Colossians 3:5-8

October 31, 1517: Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle; they were ninety-five propositions for debate, stimulated by the selling of indulgences... as though salvation could be bought and sold like a commodity

Luther was rightly incensed and wanted to debate it... to take on the ideas at the root of the Catholic system of salvation

He could never have imagined that it was the beginning of the Reformation:

The beginning of the beginning was this statement:

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said "repent", willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.

In beginning the Reformation, Luther hearkened back to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ:

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

These two great beginnings were one and the same: God is calling on His people to spend their lives in repentance... in turning away from sin

This sermon is a renewal of that call... a call on each one of you as well as upon me, to do the deep work of repentance that is essential to genuine salvation

The holiness and fruitfulness of this church and of each of your lives personally depends on this:

The killing of sin

LAST TIME... we began

Romans 7:15-17 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

YUCK... "sin living in me"... the very thing Paul calls on us to fight in Colossians 3

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Context: Steps for a happy, healthy, fruitful Christian life...

Heavenly mindset

Battling indwelling sin

Walking together in the “New Self” in a “New Community”

Saturating Your Heart with Christ

- The Peace of Christ Ruling Our Hearts
- The Word of Christ Richly Dwelling in Our Hearts
- The Name of Christ Motivating Our Hearts
- Thanks to Christ Constantly Given by Our Hearts

I. Vigorous Warfare Against Sin (vs. 5-9)

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature

A. Steely-Eyed Killers of Sin

John Owen in his classic on the Mortification (killing) of sin:

“Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.”

B. Happiness and Fruitfulness Impossible without Warfare

C. Understanding the Enemy Outside the Walls

1. Satan: clever, relentless, vicious, way out of our league
2. The World: Satan’s masterpiece of temptation and deception

D. Understanding the Body... and the Enemy Within the Walls

1. Physical body: Created in the image of God... originally called “very good”
2. BUT a Christian’s body is mixed and mingled with indwelling sin... which Christ never had
3. Our bodies have a HISTORY with sin

^{ESV} Colossians 3:7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.

E. Understanding Salvation

- a. Justification: imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to our account by faith; declaration by God the Judge that we are righteous in His sight, not guilty
 - b. Sanctification: gradual growth into Christlikeness through the combined efforts of the Holy Spirit and the believer
 - c. Glorification: instantaneous perfection of the Christian at death and at the resurrection... we are made perfect in soul and in body, just like Christ
2. The essence of sanctification: WARFARE... the mortification of sin

F. Understanding Our Universal Duty to Kill Sin

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature

1. This is a COMMAND from Christ through the Apostle Paul... we must be about the business constantly of putting sin to death
2. No Christian is exempt AND No sin pattern is exempt
3. No Christian has "arrived" and no longer needs to fight AND God will never come to grips with or accept any sin in us

II. Naming the Battlefields

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

A. Sins of Perverted Love

1. Immorality: porneia... sexual sin;
2. Impurity: back one step to "uncleanness"... evil thoughts and intentions of the mind; a defiled mind
3. Passion: lust
4. Evil Desire: God created us to desire, to yearn... sin has its roots in evil desire
5. Greed, which is idolatry: back at last to the root: all sin is a form of idolatry... ultimately of putting our own desires and discontent above the provision of God; Greek: "desire for more"

B. Sins of Broken Relationships

Colossians 3:8-9 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other

III. What Is at Stake

Colossians 3:6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

A. Terrifying Warning

1. The wrath of God is God's passionate reaction to sin
2. God is not like the Greek philosophers... some passionless thinking machine
3. Rather, God passionately loves and rewards... but He also passionately hates and punishes

God's wrath is REASONABLE... its BECAUSE of these things that God's wrath is coming

4. There is a coming wrath that will dwarf any display of wrath in history
 - a. Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven
 - b. Jerusalem, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's armies
 - c. Hugest of all: the entire ancient world destroyed by a flood
5. None of these will even compare with the wrath to come

B. Depicted Clearly in the Book of Revelation

1. Dreadful judgments on the earth
 - a. Seven seals... Seven trumpets... seven bowls
 - b. Leaves the earth a smoldering ruin, billions of people dead, every living thing in the sea dead... all water turned into blood, the stars fallen from the sky and the elements in the earth melted in the heat
 - c. But that's NOTHING compared to hell...
2. Eternal judgment in hell

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that

were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 14:10-11 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night

C. Christ's Death Only Shelter from the Wrath of God

1. Cuban Missile crisis, Cold War Era: Shelters from Nuclear Attack, common people built in their own backyards... COMICALLY INADEQUATE
2. Thermonuclear warheads so powerful, these pathetic little shelters would never have survived... so it is with human efforts to protect ourselves from the wrath of God
3. At the cross, God poured out His wrath on Christ... He drank the wrath of God and provided the only true shelter from the coming wrath

1 Thessalonians 1:10 Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

IV. Practical Guidelines for Killing Sin

A. Come to Christ

1. Lost people have NO BUSINESS in this fight!!
2. You will misunderstand salvation if you try to fight indwelling sins without first having trusted in Christ as Savior
3. You will be led into justification by works which God has forever rejected!!

B. Determine to Fight this Vicious Battle Every Day

Owen: "There is not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed upon; and it will be whilst we live in this world."

BEGIN THE FIGHT!!!

C. Rely on the Holy Spirit, Not on Fleshly Means

1. Romans 8:13
2. Colossians 2:
3. Extreme asceticism, harsh treatment of the body is ineffective

4. Understand that all human efforts merely make mortification possible
 - a. Prepare for the battle... but the battle occurs at the moment of temptation
 - b. The battle is the Lord's... Christ alone has power to kill sin
- D. Be Cross-Centered
1. The cross has power to make the world look as spiritually dead as it really is
 2. Christ on the cross has power to kill lust within us
 3. Christ's blood shed on the cross has permanent sin-killing power
 4. Be much in meditation of Christ's death on the cross and sin will shrivel and the world will seem dead to us
- E. Understand What Mortification Is Not and What It Is
1. it is NOT
 - a. NOT to kill a particular sin completely, for that it impossible in this life
 - b. NOT to allow sin to conceal itself and then appear in a different guise
 - c. NOT to develop a quiet, thoughtful, peace-loving nature
 - d. NOT to divert particularly troubling sins so they are not so prevalent
 - e. NOT to conquer certain sins occasionally
 2. It is
 - a. A habitual weakening of sin's root, as how a victim dies on the cross... gradually, slowly losing power
 - b. A constant fighting and contending against all indwelling sin with no respite... both attack and defense... attack, by doing what most frustrates sin; defend by preparing for sin's sudden lunges at us
 - c. Consistent success over sin, winning again and again in the moments of temptation, seeing progress in mortification
- F. Resolve to Fight Sin on All Fronts
1. James 2:10
- James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.***

2. Learn to hate sin, all sin, any sin, sin itself, as the vile virus of evil that it is
3. Learn to see sin in the light of the glory of God and what an affront it is to Him
4. God doesn't like some sins better than others
5. God's work consists in UNIVERSAL OBEDIENCE...

G. Study the Lusts That Are Attacking You

When is a sin habit particularly dangerous??

1. If a sin habit has been in the soul a long time so that you scarcely even notice it or make frequent allowances for it
2. If your heart speaks peace to your soul despite the open presence of this sin habit
3. If the sin frequently triumphs over you... so that your affections are tied up in the sin, disappointed if you can't pursue the sin, secretly hoping for opportunities to pursue it
4. If the sin's danger rather than love of God is the prime restraint (in other words, if you could get away with it without suffering any consequences, would you do it gladly)
 - a. Such a person casts off renewing grace and is now relying on restraining grace
 - b. Like a high-wire acrobat who frequently falls and needs the net again and again
 - c. So are Christians who rely on God to bail them out again and again, rather than growing in love of Christ so that we stop falling
5. If God has hardened our hearts in reference to this sin so that we scarcely feel any conviction in the matter
6. If the sin has already withstood disciplines from God and still it remains strong
7. IF YOU SEE THESE THINGS, BE AFRAID... BE VERY AFRAID... and fall before God and beg Him for freedom in this area
8. Study also what the sin has done to defeat you
 - a. If you are prone to complaining, study an occasion of complaining and find out what led you to do it

- b. If you are prone to arguing with your spouse, find out what led to it that particular time
- c. If you are prone to sexual lust, and give in to temptation through the eyes, find out what Satan did to ensnare you this time
- d. If you are prone to unforgiveness, see what the sin has done in your heart to harden you against that person

H. Labor on Your Heart

- 1. Increase a sense of the shame you will feel on judgment day in giving Christ an account
- 2. Increase a sense of the vileness of sin, of its sheer ugliness... see it in light of eternity
- 3. Get a constant longing and breathing after freedom from this sin... yearn for freedom, sigh after it, cry out to God for it

I. Crush Sin Early in the Battle

- 1. Fight hard against the first risings of temptation in your heart

“Rise mightily against *the first actings* of thy distemper, its first conceptions; suffer it not to get the least ground ... it is impossible to fix bounds for sin.”

German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel early in 1944 concerning the German defense of the impending cross-channel invasion by the Allies: “The war will be won or lost on the beaches,” he said. He went on to say that, once the Allies got a beachhead established in Normandy, they would break out and sweep across France, and the war would be lost. “The first twenty-four hours will be critical. For both the Allies and us, it will be the longest day.” So it is, says Owen, with the battle against sin. Once sin establishes a beachhead in your life, it presses on to conquer all. For the Christian battling sin, “the longest day” never ends until death brings him to heaven.

J. Deal Thoroughly with Sin in Confession and Repentance

- 1. When the Spirit convicts you of sin, do you feel the pain and deal with the cause or do you block it with pain-killers?
- 2. Don’t be too quick in confession... pause... hear the Spirit speaking His grief into your spiritual ears

K. Be Filled with the Spirit and All of His Graces

- 1. The Spirit fights sin mostly by making righteousness and holiness so beautifully attractive

2. The fruit of the Spirit flow from a heart FILLED with the Spirit
3. Be filled with the Spirit and sin will appear to be the repulsive thing it is

L. Be Optimistic in Christ

John Owen: Christ's blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin sick souls. Live in this and you will die a conqueror; yes, you will, through the good providence of God live to see your lust dead at your feet!

V. A Call to Repentance

- A. But... what is genuine repentance??
- B. Thomas Watson, The Nature of True Repentance

- 1. Sight of sin**
- 2. Sorrow for sin**
- 3. Confession of sin**
- 4. Shame for sin**
- 5. Hatred for sin**
- 6. Turning from sin**