

Weekly Reflection – Living with the Blind Up

My chair sits in front of a window in the living room and in the mornings the sun pours through that window. It can get quite warm sitting in that sunshine. The window is a means or an avenue for the sunlight to shine on me. When the blind is down it blocks the sunlight from shining on me as I sit in my chair. This window stands for a means of grace, a channel for God's grace to pour into your life; and the blind represents unconfessed and unforgiven sin in our life. And just like the window blind blocks the sunlight from shining on me, unforgiven sin blocks God's grace from pouring into our lives.

And here's the thing, we can read our Bible with the blinds closed, we can pray with the blinds closed, we can go to church with the blinds closed, we can talk the Christian talk with the blinds closed and the effect is the same; we don't receive the grace of God because the blinds are closed. When we choose sin, we build a barrier between ourselves and our holy Father. We pull the blind on fellowship with Him and in a real sense shut down avenues of His grace into our lives and we begin to feel the chill of spiritual separation.

It is up to you if the blind is opened or closed. The barrier is inside the house, not outside. God does not want the blind closed the devil does. There's only one lethal, deadly, ultimately destructive weapon in the artillery of Satan. Unforgiven sin. Nobody goes to hell or is separated from the grace and fellowship of God because of being harassed or possessed or oppressed by the devil. People go to hell for one reason and people are separated from the grace and fellowship of God for one reason, unforgiven sin. John Owen said, "Be killing sin or sin will be killing you." God said, ***"For if you live according to the flesh (the internal, self-centered human nature that rebels against God and desires sin) you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."*** (Romans 8:13 ESV) We're talking about going to war. We're talking about making battle on the thing that is killing us, the thing that is destroying us, the thing that is keeping us out of the presence of God, which is sin.

What is sin and its fruit?

The very heart of sin is preferring anything over God or trusting anything more than God. Rebellion against God. The reason we disobey God, or don't trust God, or don't love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength is because we prefer something else over God, we trust something else more than God.

The question you may be thinking is, "Can sin really kill me? Is it really that serious?" Sure, we all know we shouldn't sin so much but, "be killing sin or it will be killing you," isn't that a little extreme? Well, here is a small sampling of what God's Word says from Genesis to Revelation: ***Genesis 2:16-17 - And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die... Psalm 1:6 - the way of the wicked will perish... Ezekiel 18:20 - The soul who sins shall die... Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death... James 1:15 - Sin when it is fully grown brings forth death... Revelation 21:8 - as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.***

How does sin kill us? Sin kills us in three ways or areas. Number one, sin kills us spiritually. Number two, sin kills us physically. And number three, sin kills us relationally. Sin kills us spiritually because it separates us from the personal and intimate presence of God. ***Isaiah 59:1-2 - Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*** But sin doesn't just kill us spiritually, it also kills us physically. Sin doesn't just damage our souls, but it also damages our bodies. Any death that you see in this world, it is ultimately the payment from

sin that happened back in the Garden of Eden. **Romans 5:12** - *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—”* But it doesn't just kill us physically at the end of our lives, there is a real sense where sin is in the process of killing us right now. Read **Psalms 38:1-10**. I've never become a healthier person, physically or emotionally, because of sin. Sin kills us spiritually. Sin kills us physically. And sin kills us relationally. I'm just going to tell you your sin, it impacts other people. It doesn't just impact you. It hurts your relationships. It hurts the people around you. It hurts your family. It hurts your friends.

It often doesn't feel like sin is really impacting us in the moment, it may not feel like it's stealing life from you in the moment. But what I want you to hear is that unconfessed, unforgiven sin will have its effect on your life spiritually, physically, and relationally. So, if all of that is true, it kills you spiritually, it kills you physically, it kills you relationally, then the question that we have to ask and we need to answer is, how do we kill sin? The war battle plan, W-A-R, three step process, W-A-R.

Walk by the Spirit and in the light.

Walk by the Spirit.

“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.” (Romans 8:13) “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16 ESV) How do we put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, or how do we walk by the Spirit, so we don't gratify the desires of the flesh?

Use the Sword of the Spirit.

Ephesians 6:17 says that the weapon that the Spirit uses to kill sin is the Word of God. It says to take *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* The piece of armor in Ephesians 6 that is used for killing is the sword, and it happens to be the sword of the Spirit. And that happens to be the Word of God. The Spirit has a sword, and it is used for killing, and it is the Word of God.

Hear with faith.

What do you do with the Word for the Spirit to be active like that in killing sin? I believe we find the answer in Galatians 3:5 - *“Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—”* The answer is, by hearing with faith. You use the sword of the Spirit by hearing that Word and trusting what you hear, obedience to that Word.

Preach specific promises to kill specific sins.

Now very practically, what word should we trust? And here, I think it is absolutely crucial to say more than, “trust the gospel,” “trust in your forgiveness,” or “trust in your justification.” That's essential, because everything is based on that. But that is not the way the New Testament talks about this. The reason that we must hear and trust more is because the New Testament illustrates sin-killing over and over by telling us more than, “you are forgiven,” or “you are accepted,” or “you are righteous,” because forgiveness and justification are the foundation, and then the New Testament says, *“All the promises of God find their Yes in Him (Jesus)” (2 Corinthians 1:20)*. Because we are forgiven, because we are justified, all the promises of God, hundreds of promises that are concrete and practical and relate to specific situations, are true for you. We never leave the gospel. We are standing on the gospel all the time, but we are preaching specific promises to ourselves in order to destroy specific sins.

Walk in the light.

Read 1 John 1:5-9. What does it mean then to walk in the light? If we put these verses together, we can conclude that walking in the light is living a life of obedience and confession of our sins when we do sin. It's living like Jesus and when we fall short, we bring that sin into the light by confessing that sin. To confess means, "to say the same as." When we confess our sin, we are willing to say (and believe) the same thing about our sin that God says about it.

Biblically there are two people we need to confess our sin to. Number one is Jesus Christ. We need to confess our sin through the means of prayer to Jesus Christ, admitting to Him, "I have sinned." As God convicts us of sin that is hindering our fellowship with Him, we must confess it and receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with God to continue without hindrance. This confession to God should be personal, specific, and honest. Saying things like, "If I messed up forgive me," or, "Sorry I messed up," are not biblical confession.

Number two, we need to confess our sin to one another. ***James 5:16 - Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*** I believe the healing comes, not simply because you have confessed the sin to another human, the healing comes when the other humans pray for you. They intercede on your behalf; they come along side of you and help you fight. Confession to another in the body of Christ is essential because sin will try to demand to have us to itself, isolated from all others. Confession breaks the power of secret sin. Confession to others must be made with wisdom and discretion. An unwise confession of sin to another human can be the cause of more sin or unnecessary hurt for others. Those who hear a confession of sin also have a great responsibility. Those who hear the confession should have the proper response: loving, intercessory prayer, and not human wisdom, gossiping, or "sharing" the need" with others.

Ask, "What is the root of that sin?"

You need to know why you're sinning before you can kill the sin that is killing you. You need to get to the root of the sin, or it will grow up again to produce fruit in your life. I want to ask, why do we, as a people, sin in general? Because understanding that will help us to understand why you specifically are sinning as well. ***James 1:13-16 - Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.*** We all have desires, and most of our desires start out as good God given desires. However, those desires can lure and entice us to fulfill that desire with something other than God. The way the world and Satan try to get us to sin and destroy us is by identifying a desire, often a good desire, and then lying and deceiving us about what will satisfy that desire. In other words, we have a desire and then we believe a lie about what will satisfy or fulfill that desire and the fruit of that is sin, and that sin will grow up and bring forth death.

We all have a desire to be loved, the world and the devil will tempt you to find that love in all the wrong places, leading to sin. We all have a desire to be liked; to be accepted, the world and the devil will lure us to create a false identity so people like us or accept us. The enemy and the world come and tempt us to desire something else more than we desire God. To trust something else more than we trust God. So, if you want to kill sin, you have to get to the root, get to the reason why, get to the desire that is underneath the sin. What lie did I believe that got me to that sin? Figure out that lie, and then that will help you. Which gets us in place for the last step. When we figure out the lie, we have to...

Replace the lie with the truth and the complacency with urgent resolve.

We replace the lie with the truth and the old with the new.

In John 8 Jesus says, ***"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*** They answered him, ***"We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"*** Jesus answered them, ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."*** (John 8:31-34 ESV) Jesus is saying the Word of God is truth and it will set you free from slavery to sin. He's saying the truth is not the truth as we see it, the truth is what He says in His Word. This means we've got to be in His Word. If we're ever going to be able to look at the lies that are plaguing us and the lies that are killing us, we're going to have to know the truth and that truth is going to be found in God's Word. That means we got to read it. That means we've got to meditate on it. That means we've got to dig into the Word of God so that we can replace the lies with the truth of God.

Now, you may ask the question, but what if I don't know God's Word? Am I in trouble then? Am I going to be able to kill my sin? This is why we need each other, why we need Christian fellowship, because we don't always know the truth that we need know to be set free from sin, there's times where we are so weak or confused, we can't think straight and we need someone to speak the truth to us. To remind us of or teach us the truth we need to know so we can be free from sin.

Replace complacency with urgent resolve.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." (Hebrews 12:1-4 ESV)

It's about sitting in the chair with the blind up.

If we boil the Christian life down to simply killing sin, we rob ourselves of the deepest hope and highest joys. Yes, every true Christian will be killing sin. Any other version or distortion of Christianity falls short of what Christ died for. If we do not kill sin, we will die in our sin. While killing sin is essential to the Christian life, it's not the essence of the Christian life. When Christ calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him, and He does summon us to deny ourselves, He does so that we "may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). The life we get from Jesus is far greater than anything we put to death. The clothes God has for us to wear are far greater than anything we take off or leave behind.

Communion

We will be taking Communion together next Sunday, remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus. Yes, remembering that Jesus defeated sin and death; but also remembering that Jesus set us free from sin and death so that we can have eternal life, so that we can be sons and daughters of God Almighty, so that we can be joint heirs with Jesus, so that we can have a Living Hope, so that we can have fullness of joy and pleasures forever more with Him.