

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,” 1 Peter 3:18 ESV

Two Sundays ago, we talked about killing sin in our lives, “Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.” (John Owen) We compared unconfessed, unforgiven sin in our lives to having the blind closed in a window. With the blind down the sunlight doesn’t shine through the window like it should. With unconfessed, unforgiven sin in our life God’s grace doesn’t shine into our lives as God desires. We talked about making war on sin in our life, getting that blind up so the grace floods into our lives. W- walk by the Spirit and walk in the light. A- ask what is the root desire that caused me to act or speak in a sinful way. R – replace that lie with the truth, the old with the new and replace our casualness with sin with urgent resolve. We talked about the idea that at the root of every sin is a desire, and we are enticed and lured by the world and the enemy and our own messed up minds to try to fulfill that desire with something other than God. The root desire is not the sin; the sin is using something other than or separate from God to fulfill that desire. I ended that message by saying that killing sin in our life is not the heart or the essence of the Christian life, important and necessary but not the heart. The essence of the Christian life is sitting in the chair with the blind up being flooded with God’s grace, love, peace, joy, hope, power, wisdom, righteousness, etc... If we don’t understand and believe this than the Christian life very quickly will become a legalistic and duty driven way to live. “Gotta kill sin, gotta obey, can’t do that, gotta do that. Can I do that and still be a Christian? Do I have to do that to be a Christian?”

What I am about to say is extremely critical for you to understand, “Killing sin in our life is not the assassination of our root desires.” Or to say it another way, “Walking by the Spirit and in the light, finding the root cause of your sin, and replacing that lie we believed with the truth does not mean kill that root desire.” The root desires are not what we need to kill, the sin that needs to die is that we attempt to fulfill those desires with something outside of God and His design.

“We are far too easily pleased.”

Here is a paragraph from C.S. Lewis’s book *Weight of Glory* that hits this idea straight on: “If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Immanuel Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, God finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

Lewis is saying that the problem with the world, the problem with me, is not that I want to be full of joy, but that I don’t want nearly enough to be full of joy. Your problem is not your desires it’s that you settle for mud pies in the slums because you can’t imagine what is meant by a holiday at the sea. That’s the problem with the world. C.S. Lewis is telling us to pursue greater joy and pleasure, not less joy and pleasure. Lewis is inferring that God is the holiday at the sea and making mud pies in the slums is anything else we try to find joy and pleasure in.

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” – Westminster Shorter Catechism

Written between 1646 and 1647 by the Westminster Assembly, a large council of English and Scottish theologians, ministers, and laymen meeting in London. Do you have a category for enjoying God; and pushing it a little farther, pursuing joy in God? Or do you think, “You’re not supposed to pursue joy in God. You worship God. You serve God. You obey God. You submit to God. You deny yourself and your

desires and follow God.” Is Lewis correct, is the Catechism correct? Does the Bible diagnose the world that way, that its problem is not that it wants to be joyful and have pleasure, but that it is far too easily pleased, and it is not nearly jealous enough, zealous enough, passionate enough for its own joy? Is that what the Bible teaches, that we should be on a daily quest for maximum, longest lasting joy and pleasure? I strongly believe that is exactly what the Bible teaches, that is how we are called to defeat sin in our lives, by pursuing our ultimate joy and pleasure, that the way we glorify God is by finding our greatest joy and pleasure in Him.

God commands us to be joyful pleasure seekers.

- ***Psalms 100:1-2 - Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!***
- ***Psalms 37:4 - Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.***
- ***Philippians 4:4 - Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.***
- ***John 15:10-11 - If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.***

Those verses you just read are commands, commands to rejoice, to be glad, to delight, to have our desires filled, to obey so that your joy will be full. We should not put obedience and the pursuit of joy in God in alternative categories. They come together hand in hand. They overlap.

Faith teaches us to pursue joy in God.

The nature of faith teaches us to pursue our fullest joy in God. ***Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*** I want to please God. Without faith, I can't please God. Then he says that faith believes two things: God exists, and He rewards those who seek Him. Faith is not, "I believe Jesus died for my sin so now I will deny myself and dutifully work for Him." Faith means coming to God, confident that He is and that He will be for you the reward you've been longing for all your life. That He will be the ultimate satisfaction for all of your desires. That's what faith is; that's why we seek God.

Biblical self-denial is for the purpose of greater joy.

Jesus's teaching about self-denial leads us to the conclusion that we should pursue maximum, longest lasting joy and pleasure in God. That's counterintuitive but let me read you a text: ***Mark 8:34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*** So, Todd, you're telling us to pursue our own joy when Jesus told us to pursue self-denial and cross-bearing. And my response to that objection is this: Read the next verse. Verse 35 gives the argument for why you should deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Jesus. ***Mark 8:35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*** What is Jesus saying? He's saying lose this temporary life so you can gain eternal life. Deny yourself mud pies in the slums so you can have a vacation at the beach. It's teaching that he who would hate his life in this world, will keep it for eternal life (***John 12:25***). I believe in self-denial, but only as a means to greater joy, a greater treasure.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Matthew 13:44 ESV

In this parable this man is willing to sell everything he has (that's self-denial) with joy so that he can get a greater treasure.

God is where maximum joy and pleasure can be found.

Psalms 16:11 - You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. It seems to me that this verse is saying that the path of life that God desires to make known to us leads to fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. You are offered in God's presence fullness of joy. There is no such thing conceivable that's fuller than full. You are offered pleasures forever. There is nothing longer than forever; therefore, it cannot be improved. That is the essence of the Christian life. Eternal life in the presence of God experiencing Him as our full joy and pleasure forever.

Jesus died so you can experience full joy and pleasures forever.

We make war on sin in our lives because we're after greater joy and pleasure, and that greater joy and pleasure is God Himself. So, don't kill your root desires, start giving them what they really want, God. God is after you and after your joy, and nothing needs to stand in your way because He sent His Son into the world to shed His blood so that your guilt could be removed, your righteousness could be provided, your condemnation could be taken away, and you can hear Him saying, "I sent My Son Jesus into the world to suffer once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring you to Me; so that you can be in My presence and have fullness of joy and be at My right hand and have pleasures forevermore." God sent Jesus into the world to get you to the holiday at the sea, at the cost of His Son's life.

Maybe it's time to stop trying to kill your desires and start stirring up your desires and going hard after God who will satisfy those desires. Have you been far too easily pleased?

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