

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

“Preparing for the Attack”

April 6, 2014

Sermon Text: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: Genesis 39

Introduction-

It is never a good idea to put off preparing for an enemy attack. We must train for the battle *now*. I want to spend our time together today directing you to this preparation. It is a given – the temptation of the world and the devil directed against our sinful flesh, is going to come. How do we prepare?

1. Do Not Grieve the Spirit – Change Your Clothes!

Indulging the flesh strengthens it. As you listen to the following Scripture, notice that the instruction “do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” appears right in the center of instruction about putting off the old clothes of the flesh and putting on your new wardrobe – the new self who you now are in Christ. This is an amazing passage. You find the renewing of the mind here and the instruction of not giving the devil an opportunity. This section really is still another on walking by the Spirit and thereby putting to death the deeds of the flesh. It opens with a reminder that every Christian has been taught by Jesus’ truth, which I think is still another reference to the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 4:19-32 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (20) **But that is not the way**

you learned Christ!-- (21) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (22) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (23) **and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,** (24) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

(25) Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (26) Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (27) **and give no opportunity to the devil.** (28) Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (29) Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

(30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

(31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with

all malice. (32) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. That is what happens when we yield to temptation and the desires of our flesh.

2. Immerse Yourself in the Word With Prayer

If the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, then surely the more we study His truth, the easier it will be for Him to lead us in that truth.

Psalms 119:9-11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. (10) With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! (11) I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Jeremiah 15:16-17 Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am

called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. (17) I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.

Psalms 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; (2) but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

This point is vital. If we do not apply ourselves to the reading and study of Scripture, praying and asking the Lord to teach us, then we are hindering the Spirit's ability to lead us. I have no doubt that this is a chief reason, if not *the* chief reason for the sad condition of the church today.

Here is John Owen on this:

A man finds any lust to bring him into the condition formerly described; it is powerful, strong, tumultuating, leads captive, vexes, disquiets, takes away peace; he is not able to bear it; wherefore he sets himself against it, prays against it, groans under it, sighs to be delivered: but in the meantime, perhaps, in other duties, -- in constant communion with God, --

in reading, prayer, and meditation, -in other ways that are not of the same kind with the lust wherewith he is troubled, -- he is loose and negligent. Let not that man think that ever he shall arrive to the mortification of the lust he is perplexed withal.

Owen, John (2010-03-23). Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers (p. 52). . Kindle Edition.

3. Give serious consideration to the evil and danger of sin.

When Joseph was hard-pressed by Potiphar's wife, alluring him to sin, he looked at the evil of the thing for what it was:

Genesis 39:9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

I want to read some comments to you on this point from John Owen as he emphasizes the importance of taking careful note of the evil and danger of sin. These quotes are all taken from his book, The Mortification of Sin:

1. Get a clear and abiding sense upon thy mind and conscience of the guilt, danger, and evil of that sin

wherewith thou art perplexed. It is one of the deceits of a prevailing lust to extenuate its own guilt. "Is it not a little one?" "When I go and bow myself in the house of Rimmon, God be merciful to me in this thing." "Though this be bad, yet it is not so bad as such and such an evil; others of the people of God have had such a frame; yea, what dreadful actual sins have some of them fallen into!" Innumerable ways there are whereby sin diverts the mind from a right and due apprehension of its guilt.

Consider the danger of it, which is manifold:- (1.) **Of being hardened by the deceitfulness.** This the apostle sorely charges on the Hebrews, chap. iii. 12, 13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "Take heed," saith he, "use all means, consider your temptations, watch diligently; there is a treachery, a deceit in sin, that tends to the hardening of your hearts from the fear of God." The hardening here mentioned is to the utmost, -- utter obduration; sin tends to it, and every distemper and lust will make at least some progress towards it. Thou that wast tender, and didst used to melt under the word, under afflictions, wilt

grow as some have profanely spoken, "sermon-proof and sickness-proof." Thou that didst tremble at the presence of God, thoughts of death, and appearance before him, when thou hadst more assurance of his love than now thou hast, shalt have a stoutness upon thy spirit not to be moved by these things. Thy soul and thy sin shall be spoken of and spoken to, and thou shalt not be at all concerned, but shalt be able to pass over duties, praying, hearing, reading, and thy heart not in the least affected. Sin will grow a light thing to thee; thou wilt pass it by as a thing of nought; this it will grow to.

And what will be the end of such a condition? Can a sadder thing befall thee? Is it not enough to make any heart to tremble, to think of being brought into that estate wherein he should have slight thoughts of sin? Slight thoughts of grace, of mercy, of the blood of Christ, of the law, heaven, and hell, come all in at the same season. Take heed, this is that thy lust is working towards, -- the hardening of the heart, searing of the conscience, blinding of the mind, stupifying of the affections, and deceiving of the whole soul.

[Consider] the danger of some great temporal correction, which the Scripture calls "vengeance," "judgment," and "punishment." Ps.

lxxxix. 30-33, Though God should not utterly cast thee off for this abomination that lies in thy heart, yet he will visit thee with the rod; though he pardon and forgive, he will take vengeance of thy inventions. O remember David and all his troubles! look on him flying into the wilderness, and consider the hand of God upon him. Is it nothing to thee that God should kill thy child in anger, ruin thy estate in anger, break thy bones in anger, suffer thee to be a scandal and reproach in anger, kill thee, destroy thee, make thee lie down in darkness, in anger? Is it nothing that he should punish, ruin, and undo others for thy sake?

Let me not be mistaken. I do not mean that God doth send all these things always on his in anger; God forbid! but this I say, that when he doth so deal with thee, and thy conscience bears witness with him what thy provocations have been, thou wilt find his dealings full of bitterness to thy soul. If thou fearest not these things, I fear thou art under hardness.

(3.) Loss of peace and strength all a man's days. To have peace with God, to have strength to walk before God, is the sum of the great promises of the covenant of grace. In these things is the life of our souls. Without them in some comfortable measure, to live is to

die. What good will our lives do us if we see not the face of God sometimes in peace? if we have not some strength to walk with him?

Now, both these [i.e., peace and strength] will an unmortified lust certainly deprive the souls of men of. This case is so evident in David, as that nothing can be more clear. How often doth he complain that his bones were broken, his soul disquieted, his wounds grievous, on this account! Take other instances:

Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and hid myself." What peace, I pray, is there to a soul while God hides himself, or strength whilst he smites?

Hos. v. 15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face;" -- "I will leave them, hide my face, and what will become of their peace and strength?"

If ever, then, thou hast enjoyed peace with God, if ever his terrors have made thee afraid, if ever thou hast had strength to walk with him, or ever hast mourned in thy prayer, and been troubled because of thy weakness, think of this danger that hangs over thy head. It is perhaps but a little while and thou shalt see the face of God in peace no more. Perhaps by to-morrow thou

shalt not be able to pray, read, hear, or perform any duties with the least cheerfulness, life, or vigour; and possibly thou mayst never see a quiet hour whilst thou livest, -- that thou mayst carry about thee broken bones, full of pain and terror, all the days of thy life. Yea, perhaps God will shoot his arrows at thee, and fill thee with anguish and disquietness, with fears and perplexities; make thee a terror and an astonishment to thyself and others; show thee hell and wrath every moment; frighten and scare thee with sad apprehensions of his hatred; so that thy sore shall run in the night season, and thy soul shall refuse comfort; so that thou shalt wish death rather than life, yea, thy soul may choose strangling.

Consider this a little, -- though God should not utterly destroy thee, yet he might cast thee into this condition, wherein thou shalt have quick and living apprehensions of thy destruction. Wont thy heart to thoughts hereof; let it know what is like to be the issue of its state. Leave not this consideration until thou hast made thy soul to tremble within thee.

There is the danger of eternal destruction. For the due management of this consideration, observe, - [1.] That there is such a connection between a continuance in sin and

eternal destruction, that though God does resolve to deliver some from a continuance in sin that they may not be destroyed, yet he will deliver none from destruction that continue in sin; so that whilst any one lies under an abiding power of sin, the threats of destruction and everlasting separation from God are to be held out to him. So Heb. iii. 12; to which add chap. x. 38. This is the rule of God's proceeding: If any man "depart" from him, "draw back" through unbelief, "God's soul hath no pleasure in him;" -- "that is, his indignation shall pursue him to destruction:" so evidently, Gal. vi. 8.

[2.] That he who is so entangled, as above described, under the power of any corruption, can have at that present no clear prevailing evidence of his interest in the covenant, by the efficacy whereof he may be delivered from fear of destruction; so that destruction from the Lord may justly be a terror to him; and he may, he ought to look upon it, as that which will be the end of his course and ways. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. True; but who shall have the comfort of this assertion? who may assume it to himself? "They that walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh."

3. Consider the evils of it; I mean its present evils. Danger respects what is to come; evil, what is present. Some of

the many evils that attend an unmortified lust may be mentioned:-

(1.) It grieves the holy and blessed Spirit, which is given to believers to dwell in them and abide with them. So the apostle, Eph. iv. 25-29, exhorting them away from many lusts and sins, gives this as the great motive of it, verse 30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." "Grieve not that Spirit of God," saith he, "whereby you receive so many and so great benefits;" of which he instances in one signal and comprehensive one,-- "sealing to the day of redemption." He is grieved by it. As a tender and loving friend is grieved at the unkindness of his friend, of whom he hath well deserved, so is it with this tender and loving Spirit, who hath chosen our hearts for a habitation to dwell in, and there to do for us all that our souls desire. He is grieved by our harboring his enemies, and those whom he is to destroy, in our hearts with him.

(2.) The Lord Jesus Christ is wounded afresh by it; his new creature in the heart is wounded; his love is foiled; his adversary gratified. As a total relinquishment of him, by the deceitfulness of sin, is the "crucifying him afresh, and the putting of him to open shame;" so every harbouring of sin that he came to destroy wounds and grieves him.

(3.) It will take away a man's usefulness in his generation. His works, his endeavours, his labours, seldom receive blessing from God. If he be a preacher, God commonly blows upon his ministry, that he shall labour in the fire, and not be honoured with any success or doing any work for God; and the like may be spoken of other conditions. The world is at this day full of poor withering professors. How few are there that walk in any beauty or glory! how barren, how useless are they, for the most part! **Amongst the many reasons that may be assigned of this sad estate, it may justly be feared that this is none of the least effectual, -many men harbour spirit-devouring lusts in their bosoms, that lie as worms at the root of their obedience, and corrode and weaken it day by day.** All graces, all the ways and means whereby any graces may be exercised and improved, are prejudiced by this means; and as to any success, God blasts such men's undertakings.

Owen, John (2010-03-23). Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers (p. 72). . Kindle Edition.

4. Separate from the Wicked & Keep Company With the Godly

While the Holy Spirit will lead us to love others, He will particularly draw

us into fellowship with other believers. That means, conversely, that He will lead us away from fellowship with the wicked, and this is a vital point for us to note.

The world pressures us to be “tolerant” of everyone and everything. That is one of the greatest evils being taught today in the church – a denial of evil. A denial of real truth. The claim that if you separate from the wicked, you will be branded as judgmental and cruel.

But the Holy Spirit does this very thing. He exposes evil and He leads us to reject it and separate from it and instead join ourselves to the Godly:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome

you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

This is vital for us to understand, and it is widely denied today even among Christians due to a prevalence of false teaching. *The Holy Spirit leads us away from the wicked.* Here is further proof:

John 10:14-16 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, (15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

That voice is of course His Word in connection with the leading of the Spirit in us. The wicked cannot hear it.

1 John 4:4-7 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (5) They are from the world;

therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (7) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

you must not allow yourself to be diverted into the pursuit of some “good” thing. You must be born again. Apart from knowing and being made new by Christ, all else is lost.

Conclusion

Let's close now with two important truths, one for the Christian and one for the unsaved:

Christian, did you notice that wonderful fact we just read? *He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* Christ, by His Spirit, has given us a mighty, unstoppable Champion who cannot be overcome by the world, the flesh, or the devil. Walk in Him and you will conquer.

And finally for anyone here today who is not in Christ –

The chief work for the unsaved person is to seek Christ. While it is a good thing to turn away from sin, you must not make moralism your primary objective. Because if you are not in Christ, you will never truly put to death the deeds of the flesh. You will never have real life. Therefore