

KILLING SIN – PART 2: REASONS & TACTICS

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Welcome/Intro

Our nature - apart from Christ - is to sin. Those who do not kill sin along the way will make little or no progress in the Christian journey. It is our joy and delight to grow in Christ by killing sin.

Romans 8:12-13: *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 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.*”

John Owen, puritan pastor & author, wrote in his book *The Mortification of Sin* – “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

We have to some degree become infatuated with the “feel good about myself” mentality of our culture, or a reductionistic view of God, so talking about sin is uncomfortable

- That’s why we should read old dead guys like Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, Charles Spurgeon.
 - o They feared the reality of sin dwelling within them
 - o They saw sin as a diabolical force within us
 - o Ralph Venning – puritan - in only a few pages of his *The Sinfulness of Sin* – describes sin as vile, ugly, odious, malignant, pestilent, pernicious, hideous, spiteful, poisonous, virulent, villainous, abominable, and deadly
 - o The great pillars of our faith took sin very seriously – they knew they had to be active in killing it

The tendency will be to tolerate the peccadillos and deflect “sin” to mean the great blatant sins of others, while ignoring our own.

So as we build on yesterday, let me give you **SIX REASONS WHY WE NEED TO KILL SIN** – these, I hope, will also expand our definition of sin

(No original ideas here. These are a paraphrase of Owen from *The Mortification of Sin*)

1.) WHILE WE ARE IN THIS WORLD, SIN WILL ALWAYS BE IN US.

- Thus, there is always a need to kill it
- Some people will wrongly tell you that Christ makes you perfect here – that you are now able to keep the commands of God and be free from sin (ie – sinless)
 - o Though we are no longer slaves to sin, our old nature remains until Christ’s return
- Paul did not feel he had yet reached sinlessness in this world

- o Phil 3:12 - *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*
- Our inward selves must be renewed – you don't say a prayer and then sit on your spiritual bottoms for the next 40 years
 - o 2 Cor. 4:14 - *we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*
- While here, we know in part – the work is complete in the sense of eternity, but while we are still moving through time, it is ongoing
 - o 1 Cor 13:12 - *Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*
- There is a remaining darkness that must be gradually removed – 2 Pet. 3:18 - *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*
- **1 John 1:5-10** says it very clearly
- It is important to understand his audience - Not intuitive like “Ephesians”, “Colossians”, “Philippians”
 - o I think this is a letter written to believers b/c
 - He addresses those who “claim to have fellowship” with Jesus
 - He uses familial language – “my little children”
 - He uses intimate relational language – “beloved”
 - He includes himself when he makes the clear statement I am talking about
 - 1 Jn 1:8 - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. WHILE WE ARE IN THE WORLD - the world system, this present age - sin will be with us.

2.) SIN IS STILL ACTIVE & LABORING TO BRING ABOUT THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH.

It is still in us AND STILL AT WORK.

“When sin lets us alone, we may let sin alone; but sin is always active when it seems to be the most quiet, and its waters are often deep when they are calm. We should therefore fight against it and be vigorous at all times and in all conditions, even when there is the least suspicion” – John Owen

- SIN IS ACTIVE
- Sin “easily entangles” – Heb. 1
- Evil desire gives birth to sin – James 1

- Gal 5:17 -For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.
- Sin does not take the day off, no vacation - it is in us and it is at work to deceive and destroy and obscure the joy and glory of God

3.) IF SIN IS NOT CONSTANTLY KILLED, IT WILL BRING FORTH GREATER SINS (or) SIN IS PROGRESSIVE

- **Ever use the phrase** “Doesn’t hurt to look” ? Not true.

Gen. 3 – The Fall – “Eve saw that the tree was good... delighted the eyes” “She saw it was desirable” “She took and ate”

- The progression – held it with her eyes (MIND), held it with her head, heart, held it with her hands - HEAD - HEART - HANDS
- SAME THING in 2 Sam 11 - David’s sin with Bathsheba began with a glance - the gate of the eye, leading into the MIND
- Cheating on your wife didn’t happen “all of the sudden” ... Porn addiction doesn’t start with porn... it started with thoughts, little lingering looks, small steps down a path with a specific destination - PROV 7
- Murder doesn’t start out as murder... it starts out as anger, embarrassment, bitterness, a grudge

James 1:15 - Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Feed a kid and it grows - Like any child, feed sin and it grows

- How do you feed sin? Don’t fight it.
- Like in the movie GREMLINS - It will eventually get too big for you to handle
- Heb 3:13 – the deceitfulness of sin will harden you
- Sin by its nature proceeds by degrees – and as it advances, the heart gets harder
 - o Like in a dating relationship – after a while, holding hands just doesn’t do it for you

HOW SIN ENTERS SOCIETY - at first, it’s a shock. Eventually it’s tolerated. Then it’s promoted. It’s progressive, and it brings forth greater sin.

4.) THE HOLY SPIRIT & OUR NEW NATURE IN CHRIST ARE GIVEN TO US TO PURPOSEFULLY FIGHT & KILL SIN

As Christians, we are able to participate with the divine nature of God in His work on earth

- 2 Pet 1:3-4 - His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises,

so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

- Gal 5:17 -For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.
- We have been given the Holy Spirit to do this work of killing sin in our lives
 - Why Eph 6 makes reference to the “sword of the Spirit” – (not a sword made of Spirit, but you get to use the same weapon the Holy Spirit uses – the word of God)
- We must not neglect to use what God has given us, or we fail to please our master – see the parable of the talents
- Owen – “If we do not seek daily to mortify sin, we sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God who has given us the weapons of our warfare.”

5.) IF YOU NEGLECT TO KILL SIN, THE INNER MAN WILL DECAY, INSTEAD OF BEING RENEWED

Paul tells us in 2 Cor 4:16 that the inward man is being renewed while the outward man is wasting away.

Neglect to kill sin, and the inward man wastes away

Consider John’s warning to the church in Sardis in Rev 3 – “...you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.”

From Psalm 38 - an example of a decaying inner man:

My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.

6.) OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS OUR DELIGHT AND DUTY BEFORE GOD.

2 Cor 7:1 - let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

1 Pet 2:2 - Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

2 Pet 3:18 - But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Those who do not kill sin along the way will make little or no progress in the Christian journey. It is our joy and delight to grow in Christ by killing sin.

Again – let us be clear in saying that the work of Christ is perfect – but we are not yet experiencing perfection in our mortal bodies.

- Scripture is clear we are not talking about works-based salvation, behavior modification, performance-based religion – this is not show, this is not mere morality, this is not “do better, try harder” - this is not sin management
- We came to Christ through the call of the Gospel
- The Gospel is only for sinners. (Christ died for the ungodly – Rom 5:6)
- Though the penalty of sin is paid for in Christ, we don’t stop sinning the moment we accept Him
- But we are now armed to fight, to do violence against that enemy within
- So we are in constant need of the application of the Gospel in our lives
 - o We are not perfect, but we are being perfected
 - o Christ has begun a good work and will carry it on until His return (Phil. 1)

Where we once fought God in our sin, we now join the cause for His glory and emulate Christ in killing sin!

THE TACTICS OF THE ENEMY

If we want to kill sin, we must know not only what it is & why we should do violence against it - we must learn how it operates.

Romans 7:21 - So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

Let me give you 4 underlying tactics of how sin works (The Enemy Within by Kris Lundgaard)

1.) SIN OPERATES AS A LAW (“I find this law at work...”)

Why does Paul call it a “law” – metaphor!

- Some sense of irony here, b/c he writes earlier in the chapter about the law of God – which is supposed to rule our lives
- When we think of “Law” – rule, power, authority, constraint, conformation, consequence

We can think of law in the moral realm

- LAW Commands required actions – “honor your parents” “love your neighbor”

- LAW Reveals forbidden actions – “do not kill” “no trespassing” -
- Dictates consequences – law compels us to submit & obey by offering rewards or threatening punishments

We can think of law in the natural realm - as we would “laws of nature”

- Gravity – conforms us to its “commands”
- Here is a law that is not a precept or an idea – but an actual force that makes objects bend to its “will”
- This is the same sense that our urges are law – hunger, thirst, fear, sexual drive – each exerts force that seeks to submit us, fulfill its demands

Sin operates in either sense like a law – it entices, threatens, it bullies

- Entices with promises of pleasure, peace, satisfaction if you conform
- Threatens with CONSEQUENCES - guilt, doubt, shame, unfulfillment, discontentment if you do not conform

Paul calls sin a law to communicate powerfully to us that it is a force that is always at work, always beckoning, pulling, pushing, always threatening – it is constantly working to conform us to evil

This raises the question – “In what sense has Christ defeated sin in the believer?” – He has overthrown its rule, weakened its power, and killed its root so that it cannot bear the fruit of eternal death in the believer.

- **Still – sin is sin; though its rule and ultimate power is broken, its nature and purpose remain the same**

2.) THE LAW OF SIN IS FOUND INSIDE US

Rom. 7:21 – Paul *found* this law ...RIGHT THERE WITH ME.

Here it moves from distant theory, to uncomfortable closeness

- We need a deep sense of that uncomfortable closeness
- This is the difference between knowing about cancer and having it
 - o You will treat it differently

We must come to terms with this. Sin is not merely an outside force.

- o If more of us FOUND this law, we would see more struggling against it, more striving in prayer, see less fruit of it in our lives
- o When Paul finds this law, (v 24) - What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Note that believers are the only people who can find the law of sin at work inside us.

- Unbelievers can’t get that. Like a fish doesn’t know “wet”.

- They may know something is wrong, maybe even that something is wrong with them – but the fact that this law orders their life – this cannot come without Christ.
- The non-Christian is simply borne along by this river – the Christian strives against it.

3.) WE FIND THIS LAW WHEN WE WANT TO DO GOOD

Romans 7:21 - So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

Paul points out he didn't find this law during a time of great backsliding, or when he was indifferent to towards God.

- Christ rules his heart; Paul has set his mind to obey his Savior and King

So be aware – when you set your mind to obey, love, serve, and make known Jesus – you will find the law, force of sin there with you

- When you do, be encouraged
- Sin is powerful, but it does not rule your heart
- By God's grace, may the desire to do good prevail; by His Spirit may that good desire prevail

4.) THIS LAW NEVER RESTS

Romans 7:21 - So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

IMPLICATION – this is ongoing. There is a sense of constancy in Paul's tone here.

Since grace now rules our heart – not sin – we will desire to do good. There are 2 main categories that describe this desire

- Once we are in Christ, there is now a general & constant desire to please God
- There are also specific and timely desires – like to spend a time in prayer, reading, to tithe

The law of sin opposes both the general/constant desire and the specific desires to do right before God.

- Sin constantly tugs at the constant general desire to love God
- AND when a specific desire rises up, sin fights the believer on that specific point (“evil is right there with me”).
 - That's why you get tired when you start praying, distracted in your mind when you start reading, start thinking about how much you'll need your

money when you commit to tithe; when you make up your mind to go talk to that person about reconciling that thing, you start making excuses.

Understanding these points that Paul draws out is the beginning of obedience to God – which is key in killing sin.

We must understand – particularly, I think – that this law is inside us. We want to blame it on circumstance, situation - the external. But sin originates from WITHIN.

James 4:1 - What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 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.

Matthew 15:11 - “What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

- Sin doesn't do it's work on us from the outside.
- We see the effects of sin on the outside – these are ripples of the surface of the ocean
- Sin is an inside job, as it were – it works, it compels, it urges from within – from within the HEART

The HEART is the internal battleground upon which this battle is fought – when you really “FIND” sin, it won't just be your outward actions. It resides in the heart. you don't need to look hard for evidence of this!

- This is why God promises to circumcise His people's hearts in the OT, and write His law on their hearts in the NT
- Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
- The heart is fickle, corrupt – The Preacher in Eccl. 9:3 – “The hearts of men ... are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live...”
- Matt 15:19 – Jesus says the heart is a fountain of sin – For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.
- Luke 6:45 – we store up evil in our hearts – The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

What do we mean by “heart”?

Heart used different ways in the Bible

- Sometimes it refers to the mind believing or being enlightened (Rom. 10:10 – For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified...)
- Sometimes it refers to the will deciding & acting (2 Cor. 9:7 – Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.)
- Sometimes refers to the emotions, affections feeling (2 cor 2:4 – For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.)

So when we talk about sin being in our heart or Christ ruling the heart, we mean the SUM of the heart, encompassing the parts of who you are:

- THE MIND – thoughts, plans, judgements, discernments (probably including THE CONSCIENCE – sense of right/wrong, which will approve/condemn the mind, will & affections)
- THE WILL – actions, outward choices
- THE AFFECTIONS – longings, desires, revulsions, feelings

It is these areas where sin is at work, luring, deceiving, tempting

SIN DECEIVES –“Sin makes you stupid”

- Heb. 3:13 – But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.
- Paul tells us in Titus 3:3 before we were in Christ we were “foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved”
- This is why he tells us in Eph. 4:22 – with regard to your former way of life, ... “put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires”

SIN DECEIVES and it is at work in these faculties – Mind, Will, Affections ... BUT PARTICULARLY, THE MIND – that’s where we’ll pick up tonight.