

Rhythms of Grace: Constant in Killing sin

I. Know your enemy - What is sin?

A. There are different kinds of sin in the Bible

i. Sin has different levels of intentionality

- The Old Testament talks about sin of omission and intentional (high handed) sin. We call these sins of omission and commission. Sin is not just the wrong things we do, it's the right things we fail to do. Sin is not just intentional, it is anything falling short of perfection - "the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally," "But the person who does anything with a high hand..." (Num. 15:28-31).
- Anything that doesn't come from faith is sin. Any thought or act that doesn't flow from our trust in and worship of God is less than what God designed and requires of us.

Romans 14:23

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

ii. The Old Testament uses different words for sin to emphasize different aspects of it

- Sin is falling short or missing the mark (*ḥata*): Sin is anything less than perfection.
- Sin is crooked (*'avon*): Sin twists God's good design.
- Sin is breaking God's commands (*pesha'*): Sin is rebellious.
- Sin is unjust (*'avel*): Sin doesn't care about others' right(s).
- Sin is treacherous and sneaky (*bagad*): Sin hides and deceives.
- Sin breaks trust with God and others (*maal*): Sin hurts relationships.
- The New Testament word for sin (*hamartia*) encompasses this breadth, from mistakes to serious offenses.

iii. Fundamentally, sin is **misplaced worship**

Sin is not doing what God requires of us, not living as he has called us to live, and, therefore, never fully being who God created us to be. Sin is living without reference to God, not viewing him to be the defining reality of our lives around which our entire lives need to be centered. And when we don't live as if God is who He is, we violate his law and all the good, loving, protecting guidelines that he's provided to us for how to best and most fully live (John Lin).

B. There are different consequences for sin

It is true that all sin causes us to be worthy of death (Rom. 6:23). But that doesn't mean that all sin is equal in every way. It's not. Not all sin is equally heinous to God, or damaging to either ourselves or others. For example, in the Old Testament, some sins are called an 'abomination' while others are not, some sins deserve death, and others required different kinds of reparations, some more and some less. All sin goes against God's good design, but not all sin affects it equally.

Paul also mentioned how sexual immorality is uniquely a sin against our own body (1 Cor. 6:18).

C. Sin comes from the heart

The mouth speaks out of what fills the heart. While sin is often seen in external actions of speaking and doing, it's root is internal.

Luke 6:45

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

Matthew 5:28

...but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

As believers, we have been given new hearts, and yet there is a war inside of us between our spirit and our flesh.

Romans 7:16-18

But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

Because we don't have direct control over our emotions, we assume we have no control. But God commands our emotions, and that shows that we are responsible for them. So in reality, according to the Bible we have indirect control over our emotions and are responsible for them (Matt. 22:37-39; Col. 3:15).

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice always...

D. Sin is believing a lie

Sin deceives and tricks us, just like it did for Eve in the garden. This means that truth is the ultimate weapon against sin.

Hebrews 3:13

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Ephesians 4:22

...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit...

Ephesians 6:17

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Sin is always a trade of instant gratification over long lasting satisfaction. That's why believing and living in light of God's promises is what keeps us from sin.

E. Why is it so important to define sin properly?

- i. When we don't define sin properly, we don't see sin primarily as an offense to our good and holy God

Ultimately, all sin is an offense against God.

Psalms 51:3

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Sin is forsaking the goodness of our God for another desire, which is idolatry.

Jeremiah 2:12-13

"Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate," declares the Lord. "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns That can hold no water."

Sin is wanting to be our own king instead of God and living for ourselves.

Genesis 3:5-6

"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

- ii. When we don't define sin properly, we blame others for our sin

We don't take responsibility for our sin (Gen. 3:12).

- iii. When we don't define sin properly, we end up easily excusing it

It's easy for us to think, I don't murder, steal, or commit adultery, so I'm doing ok. But the question is really, "Do I wake up and praise God and orient my whole life towards pleasing Him?"

- iv. When we don't define sin properly, we try to change behavior instead of the heart

It's easy to fall into the trap of trying to change behavior instead of the more difficult work of changing the heart.

For example, you can put filters on your phone to try to help you stop looking at porn, you can avoid going near the Liquor store on the way home from work to avoid alcohol, you can get accountability partners. Those may be helpful, but they do nothing to change your actual heart. Think about it, if you get angry when your kids disobey, you can avoid spending time with your kids. But Paul says that physical harsh treatment of the body and changing external circumstances to avoid sin actually does nothing to change the heart. We can actually do this with one another, where we just play it safe and avoid each others' idols.

Colossians 2:20-23

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)— in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

We can easily think that we are godly by protecting our lives. That way, we have joy and peace and life is good. But really, when we walk by faith and step out into hard situations to please the Lord, and our hearts get exposed for our selfishness, that's how we really grow. We will talk about this more on the last week of class. But it's important to understand that godliness isn't merely having a good attitude, that's not the goal of godliness, although it is part of it. If I just wanted to have a good attitude, I'd order out and watch movies all day. The goal is actually to have a good attitude while we are laying down our lives in sacrificial service to the Lord!

- v. When we don't define sin properly, we don't realize how many blind spots we have

We become complacent because we start thinking we are doing well when our sin is hidden or acceptable to society. God in His grace will bring circumstances into our lives to expose our sin, but we should be those who know well that there are always areas where our pride and selfishness haven't completely been rooted out, and we are going after our hearts in those areas.

- vi. When we don't define sin properly, we don't embrace the need to make sin right

The Bible is clear, sin damages. That's why all throughout the Old Testament there are clear repayment and reparations that are to be paid to make things right for sin.

We should never presume on God's grace (Zeph. 2:3; Amos 5:15; Heb. 6:4-9).

- vii. When we don't define sin properly, we don't have the powerful solution to sin

Our culture tells us that our 'personality type' is just who we are, and it is static and can't change. But in reality, any aspect of who we are and what we do that falls short of being like Jesus can be changed. God cares about every aspect of our character. We aren't just introverted or extroverted. The gospel moves introverted people towards caring for and serving others, and the gospel moves extroverted to be quick to listen and slow to speak.

The gospel is the power of God for complete transformation.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

F. Table Discussion: When recently have you had a wrong understanding of sin? How did that affect you and the people around you?

II. Target your enemy - Check your heart for areas of sin and identify them

We need to take sin as deathly serious.

Matthew 5:29

If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Proverbs 9:18

But he does not know that the dead are there, That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

We are called to search and watch out for our hearts. We always want to be on guard for what our desires reveal about our hearts. When we are depressed when circumstances don't go our way what does that reveal about what we were loving? When our joy or peace are taken away by circumstances, what does that show our joy and peace were in?

Psalms 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

Proverbs 4:23

Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you— unless indeed you fail the test?

1 Corinthians 11:28

But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

God's Word is the ultimate standard which shows where we fall short of living for God's glory. As we read the Word we always want to be sensitive to how we fall short of God's perfect design for us and live for ourselves instead of Him.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

When we identify our sins, we want to always make sure to check our hearts for what underlying idol or what we were worshipping that caused the behavior. Sin is not just the unkind word we say, but what we were loving that caused us to say it. Sin is not just the selfish behavior of laziness, but the idol of worshipping comfort rather than God.

Table Discussion: Why do we personally ignore and neglect our hearts?
What happens when we do?

III. Smoke out your enemy - Confession brings our sin to the light

Sin's power is in deception. It always gets us to partake by tricking us into thinking it is reasonable and worth it (sin is always believing a lie). So when sin is hidden, it more easily deceives and controls us. When we confess our sin and explain out loud what we chose over God and why, it suddenly doesn't sound as appealing and smart as it did in our heads. Then people are able to speak into our sin and help us see it as God does. If we really love being like Christ, we see the goodness of confession.

1 John 1:6-10

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Psalms 32:3-6

When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

As believers we are people of integrity. We want everything we do to be open, anyone should be able to look at any aspect of our lives because everything we do is by faith (1 Tim. 1:5).

Table Discussion: How does specifically confessing our misplaced worship

IV. Kill your enemy - Putting sin to death

A. Repentance is a change of mind over sin

To kill sin you must completely change your perspective toward sin, to no longer see it as appealing, but now see it from God's perspective and see how sad it is and genuinely feel sorrow over it. Until this change of heart happens, sin has not been killed. We have not repented until we see that worshipping anything other than God won't satisfy and is sad.

2 Corinthians 7:8-12

For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it— for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.

B. The mindset that we died to sin is vital to killing sin

The gospel reminds us that sin no longer has power and dominion over us. Its power has been defeated. It's vital to remember that Jesus died to conquer sin so that sin loses its appeal and power. As believers, there is nothing that compares to pleasing Christ, why would we want to undermine that?

Romans 6:2-7

May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Romans 6:11-13

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Colossians 3:5-6

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience...

C. Our minds need continual renewing to think differently than the world

Truth transforms our minds by making them new. We no longer think and feel the way we once did about what is good and beautiful. The truth reminds us that God alone is worthy and satisfying and the truth of God's Word constantly reminds us by faith that He alone is worthy.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

D. Table Discussion: How does knowing that Jesus died to pay for and kill sin change our mindset towards it?

V. Small Group Questions:

- What heart idols (things I love, trust, or fear) most easily deceive me into thinking it's ok to respond in the flesh?
- What are ways we confess wrongly?