“Life in the Kingdom: Fighting the Enemy Within”

Matthew 5:27-30

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 11/6/22)

The enemy isn’t just “out there” somewhere. We all wage war against indwelling sin. Ask yourself: Do you hate sin? Do you actively fight war against the sin within you, or are you waving the white flag? Life in the Kingdom demands a lifestyle of warfare against indwelling sin. We fight sin within us by faith in Christ, and letting the Holy Spirit work within us. (Q1)

Matt. 5:27-30 presents a drastic, radical message for Kingdom people. The King has come to undo what sin has messed up. Read the prophecy of Matt. 1:21 carefully: HE **WILL** SAVE! We are saved from the penalty of sin (Hell). This justification is immediate and final. A Christian is also being saved from the power of sin. This sanctification is progressive over time. Vital to our sanctification is our right understanding of God’s moral law. The law is NOT something we keep in order to be saved. The moral law reflects God’s image. Its way is neither legalism (“it’s not technically wrong, so I can get away with it”) or license (“I’m saved anyway, so I can get away with it”). God’s moral law is our blueprint for living out the best life He has for His people.

The pharisees were only concerned with the technicalities of Ex. 20:14. Sure, it says “no adultery,” but there are always loopholes (wink, wink). But God calls His people to sexual purity outside of marriage and sexual fidelity within marriage. We are called not to have adulterous hearts. **Your thoughts and imaginings matter to God!** Every person with a functioning conscience knows that he/she is a lawbreaker. That’s why we desperately need Jesus. Robert Murray McCheyne said, “Most of God’s people are content to be saved from a hell that is without; they are not so anxious to be saved from a hell that is within.” The same moral law that prohibits sexual impurity prohibits the desire for sexual impurity. Sex within marriage is pure and to be protected. Jesus is saying that the seventh commandment includes pornography or anything else that causes us to lust in our hearts.

Let’s look at John 8:3-11, the passage about the woman caught in adultery. The pharisees cared only about the outward act. Notice that Jesus stooped down in the dust, just as He stooped down for us. He came to stand between us and the law’s condemnation. Look at your own thoughts: Could you throw the first stone? No, we are all guilty before God. Jesus doesn’t cleanse us by pretending our lustful thoughts don’t matter. He cleanses us by taking the weight of our sinful thoughts upon Himself. He promises to progressively kill off the remaining sinful thoughts. Hallelujah! What a Savior! King Jesus condemns no one whose sins He came to take away. He says, “Go and sin no more.” We are free to live for our King. Love for the King brings holy order to disordered desires. (Q2)

In Matt. 5:29-30, Jesus is speaking hyperbole. He is NOT promoting self-mutilation. He is telling His followers, “TAKE SIN SERIOUSLY!” The King’s people are called to put to death the sin that remains in them (Rom. 8:13-14). As Christians, we are to live under the influence of the Spirit of God. To outsiders, our lifestyle may seem weird, but we are to close every avenue through which immoral thoughts may derail us. (Q3)

How do we do this? Job gives us a start when he says, “I have made a covenant with my eyes.” (Job 31:1). Ask yourself, what are the channels through which temptation comes to you? How can you deal decisively with those channels? We are to run from immorality and run to Christ. We are to nurture our relationship with Him and with His people. (Q4) Our wrong thinking should be displaced by right thinking. (Q5) We must pursue holiness in the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 2:22). Remember: Sin no longer reigns in you… Christ does! Victory is assured! (Q6)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Read Ps. 1:1-2. What advice do you see to help win this battle within?
2. Most men have struggled or still struggle with lustful thoughts. The turning point for me came when I confessed them as idols. Read 1 John 2:16. How can these things be idols?
3. My friend Gary gave me a piece of conduit to remind me of the Spirit working through me. How can that conduit get plugged up?
4. Read Heb. 10:24-25. Why do we need other Christians in our lives?
5. What right thinking displaces wrong thinking? Be specific.
6. Paul David Tripp (New Morning Mercies, Nov. 7) says, “God calls you to deny yourself and then blesses you with the indwelling Holy Spirit so you have the power to say no.” OK, then why don’t we always say no when we should? Give at least 2 reasons.

“Standing on the Promises” (Carter)

Standing on the promises of Christ my King,

Through eternal ages let His praises ring,

Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,

Standing on the promises of God.

**Standing, standing,**

**Standing on the promises of God my Savior;**

**Standing, standing,**

**I’m standing on the promises of God.**

Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,

Bound to Him eternally by love’s strong cord,

Overcoming daily with the Spirit’s sword,

Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises I shall not fall,

List’ning every moment to the Spirit’s call.

Resting in my Savior as my All in all,

Standing on the promises of God.